The construction of Erasmus student identity: a discourse historic approach

The Construction of Erasmus Student Identity: A Discourse Historic Approach

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All nice people, like us, are We
And everyone else is They:
But if you cross over the sea,
Instead of over the way,
You may end by (think of it!)
Looking on We
As only a sort of They!

(*We and They*, Kipling, 1977:289)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.
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Abstract

This thesis examines the construction of a student mobility programme and mobile students' identities in discourses of Erasmus exchange students (*bottom-up discourses*) and political speeches and institutional texts (*top-down discourses).* By adopting a post-modern perspective on identity and its construction in discourse, this study intends to fill the gap in the field of student mobility research, which has been predominantly concerned with North American, rather than European, or even less so with the Latvian context and has been mainly quantitative in nature, looking at large-scale statistical data, while overlooking the complexities and variation among individual experiences.

The study applies the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to three sets of data: individual interviews with incoming Erasmus exchange students in Latvia, political speeches by the former EU Minister of Education, A. Vassiliou and online texts published on the web page of the Latvian State Education Agency.

The results indicate that mobile European exchange students' identities are constructed differently in institutional as opposed to the experiential contexts. It seems that on the one hand, Latvian institutional texts focus on building a positive representation of Latvia, characterised by openness and its affiliations with Europe and the world as the outcome of the Erasmus programme; the EU political discourse promotes the triumph of Erasmus as a European project, pointing to the vitality of the student mobility programme leading to an increase in the number of people with European identity as the actual proof of the programme's success. Contrary to the institutional online texts and the Commissioner's speeches, on the other hand, the Erasmus students indicate their awareness of the complex, multiple and changing nature of mobile students' identities and their construction in discourse when faced with new contexts and diverse individuals.

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Transcription conventions used in this study[1]:

/ indicates the end of a tone group;
. pause (any additional dots indicate the length of the pause);
– means a break in intonation;
(XXX) material which is impossible to understand ;
( ) non-verbal features;
Italics used to indicate interdiscursivity;

[1] Adapted from Reisigl & Wodak (2001) and Wodak et al (2009).

Introduction

Today, triggered by a variety of factors, ranging from the accessibility of travel and cultural interaction to political changes and economic need, *student mobility* has become a well-known phenomenon. Over the last two decades the number of "international students" worldwide has increased considerably, with over five million students studying outside their home country in 2014 (ICEF Monitor, 2015)[2]. Although student mobility may seem a contemporary phenomenon, the tradition of travelling for study abroad has existed since the Middle Ages. Whilst it used to be restricted to the elite, recently it has become more accessible to many young people of university age.

Such a steady increase in the number of mobile students is partly due to the internationalisation of tertiary education, associated with the creation of the European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process, which has facilitated student mobility by continuously adapting higher education systems in Europe, ensuring comparability in the standards of higher education qualifications and strengthening quality assurance (Bologna Process, 2016)[3]. The EU-funded Erasmus student mobility programme has paved the way for reforms in European higher education under the Bologna process by providing opportunities for young people to study (for a part of their degree) at European universities. It remains inherent that the knowledge and skills acquired from studying and living abroad are invaluable and are likely to improve international relations, stimulate mobility between member states, boost European identity and increase employment opportunities for young Europeans (Mitchell et al., 2015).

Scholars working in the field of student mobility usually make a distinction between *degree mobility* or "diploma mobility" (when students pursue the whole degree abroad), which engages the majority of mobile students globally (King et al., 2010:7). However, in Europe,

[2] http://monitor.icef.com/2015/11/the-state-of-international-student-mobility-in-2015/ (accessed on 14/07/2017)
[3] https://www.ehea.info/ (accessed on 14/07/2017)

credit mobility (when students go abroad for a limited period of time, as a part of a degree programme) is the most common form of student mobility (Brooks & Waters, 2011). Although, statistically there appears to be an unprecedented increase in the number of students opting for *credit mobility* via the Erasmus programme, studies of "degree mobility" in North American context (Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2013;) together with studies of student mobility from "non-Western" towards "Western" countries (Smith & Khawaja, 2011) still prevail (Coleman, 20016; 2013; Van Mol, 2014). However, even though academic literature on the internationalization in higher education is an expanding field of research, individual perspectives of exchange students in relation to their motivation, objectives and experiences of mobility are "sorely lacking" (Waters & Brooks, 2011). Lack of such research is surprising, given that the number of Erasmus mobile students is increasing.

At the present time (2017), studies into European student mobility in such academic fields as Migration Studies, Education and Sociology of Higher Education rely predominantly on descriptive statistics. As the abundance of statistical data arrived at through a quantitative approach obscures the students' individual experiences, there appears to be lack of empirically-grounded qualitative studies of student mobility (de Federico de la Rúa, 2003; Coleman, 2015) and there are only two studies looking at mobile students' identities and their construction in language (Papatsiba, 2006; Dervin, 2007).

All in all, European student mobility remains relatively unexplored, and a number of scholars point to the need for further research into the phenomenon (Coleman, 2012; 2015; Van Mol, 2014). Study abroad has been described as "fascinating" because it explores a rich learning experience in any individual's life (Coleman, 2006:43). Therefore, the Erasmus programme allows the researcher to collect rich and exciting data; because Erasmus students are continuously on the move, a variety of societal and intercultural issues emerge, including relationships with others, adaptation to the host country, management of identity, the

development of intercultural competence, representing "one of the best laboratories available for researchers" (Dervin, 2006:14). It has been acknowledged that, since student mobility is merely an emerging area of study, more studies into the field are called for (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002: 232; 2008). Therefore, the present study hopes to respond to this call, as "every report into study abroad can add a little to the overall picture and to our understanding of one of the most complex of all educational phenomena" (Coleman, 2006: 37).

The aim of the present thesis is to broaden our understanding of Erasmus students' experience by adopting an empirically grounded discourse-analytic approach, when exploring on the one hand political discourses (*top-down*) related to the endeavour as well as Latvian institutional online texts and, on the other hand, tracing the impact of study abroad on the ways mobile students (*bottom-up*) construct their identities. The subject of identity and its construction is important in the context of student mobility, as students confront many different "others" and often base their representations of themselves and others on these encounters. It has been shown that, when an individual leaves their familiar environment and settles in a new location, they experience strangeness and unfamiliarity, which makes them reconsider their own views and opinions with regard to self and others. This has an impact on their sense of identity, reflected in their discourse (Block, 2006).

Thus, the present study also hopes to contribute to the field of student mobility and applied linguistics research by offering a dual perspective on the impact Erasmus mobility has on exchange students' identities, tapping into an area, which *hitherto* has been overlooked in student mobility research. The study begins by investigating the construction of the Erasmus programme and Erasmus students in the *top-down discourses* of the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth at the time, Mrs A. Vassiliou and Latvian institutional online texts published on the web page of the official representative of the Erasmus programme in Latvia, Latvian State Education Agency. This is set against the socio-historical

and political context that the speeches and online texts were written and delivered in. The study then moves on to the *bottom-up discourses* recorded in research interviews with the in-coming Erasmus students in Latvia. These interviews aimed to trace constructions of student mobility and representations of self and others. Studying two discursive genres (political speeches and interviews), allows us to gain insight into the political and institutional d/Discourses surrounding European student mobility, as well as the discourses emanating from the mobile student themselves.

Then, the study will compare and contrast the emerging *top-down* and *bottom-up* discourses against one another. The aim here is to identify any patterns of similarity and/or difference between the three data sets in order to identify patterns of (dis)alignment and distance/ proximity between the three. The study's theoretical and analytical framework is primarily based on Wodak's (1997; 2000; 2001; 2003) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which allows for integrating all available background (including historical background on issues such as 'mobility') information while analysing and interpreting the multiple layers of emerging discourse. A detailed linguistic analysis of the Commissioner's political speeches, Latvian institutional online texts and the interviews with Erasmus exchange students will offer an overview of interaction between various levels of context, discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to the field of discourse analysis and student mobility as well as build on the innovative application of Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach.

Latvia is one of the EU Member states and is situated in north-eastern Europe. It is a relatively small country with the population of just under 2 million people and may not be the most popular destination for either exchange or international students, as it remains relatively unexplored, especially when compared to the leading destinations for exchange students, such as Spain, the UK and Germany.

Studying the discourses of European exchange students in Latvia is particularly interesting and not only because earlier studies have not focused on the country, which receives relatively small number of exchange students. However, more recently, while incoming exchange and international student mobility has increased in many countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and partner destination countries, in Latvia, this number almost doubled between 2010 and 2013. This growth is considered to be one of the highest growth rates across all OECD and partner countries and reflects the importance attributed to internationalisation of higher education in Latvia, attracting the interest of both, international and exchange students. These recent changes make the present thesis, analysing the accounts of incoming Erasmus exchange students in Latvia and Latvian institutional online texts, very timely.

Chapter 1 of the thesis sets out the postmodern conceptualisation of "mobility" and its different shapes and guises, while in the light of existing research reflecting on its impact on the life of postmodern individuals. *Chapter 2* offers a retrospective of the Erasmus student mobility programme from its origins up to its present-day state, providing a literature review of relevant student mobility research. *Chapter 3* recapitulates the origins of "identity" research from the European Age of Enlightenment up to the post-structuralist approach to the study and conceptualisation of identity, thereby establishing the theoretical framework for the study of identity and its construction in discourse. This is followed in *Chapter 4* with background information on the data collection procedure (political speeches, institutional online texts and student interviews) in addition to an explanation of the methodological and analytical framework (the Discourse-Historical Approach) invoked for the analysis of the data. The DHA-informed discourse analysis of the political speeches and Latvian institutional online texts are presented in *Chapter 5*, followed by DHA-informed discourse analysis of the interviews with Erasmus exchange students in *Chapter* 6. Then, *Chapter 7* draws together the findings from

across the three data sets and backs up the claims by reference to theoretical and empirical arguments discussed in the literature review.

Chapter 1 therefore begins with an overview of the notion of "mobility" within the context of post-modernity and places 'study abroad' in relation to various forms of mobility and migration that exist today.

Chapter 1: Postmodernity and Global Mobility

In 2015, the number of international migrants (people living outside their country of origin) worldwide, according to the United Nations' statistics, reached 244 million, an increase of 71 million, or 41 per cent, compared to 2000[4]. According to the more recent Eurostat figures (2017), "a total of 4.7 million people immigrated to one of the EU-28 Member States during 2015, while at least 2.8 million emigrants were reported to have left an EU Member State"[5]. In Europe, migration is on the rise, precipitated by more recent political events in the Middle East. Historically, there was general agreement amongst the EU member states that Europe needs migration both economically and demographically (cf. Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008). However, in light of the recent *migrant crisis*, European country leaders and European citizens seem to be divided about its benefits, expressing uncertainty about the long and short-term impact of migration, particularly as regards allowing refugees from outside the EU within Europe's borders[6].

This chapter examines the changing and often contradictory attitudes towards mobility, reviews its historical treatment in research literature and draws on studies which have explored its impact on various individuals.

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[4] United Nations (2015) *Trends in International Migration* http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/populationfacts/docs/MigrationPopFacts20154.pdf (accessed on 24/06/2016)

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (accessed on 12/05/2017)

[6] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/02/refugees-welcome-uk-germany-compare-migration (accessed on 12/10/2015)

Economist, The. 2015. How many migrants to Europe are refugees?" *The Economist*, September 7, 2015. http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/09/economist-explains-4 (accessed on 24.06.2016).

Eurostat. 2015. Asylum in the EU: Over 210,000 first time asylum seekers in the EU in the second quarter of 2015. News release, September 18, 2015. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6996925/3-18092015-BP-EN.pdf/b0377f79-f06d-4263-aa5b-cc9b4f6a838f (accessed on 24.06.2016)

1.1. Europe between 2010 and 2012:

In order to provide the necessary historical context for the study, let us begin with a brief overview of the socio-economic and political circumstances of 2010-2012. In Europe, this period was a time of economic downturn, a time now referred to as "the great recession", reminiscent of the 'great recession' of the 1930s. Having begun in early 2008 following "the credit crunch"[7], it led to a long period of very low economic growth and increasing unemployment. The "Eurozone crisis" was triggered in 2009 as a number of central European banks sought a bailout, destabilising the Euro and even raising questions about the viability of the Euro in the longer term. However, it was this crisis which revealed that preserving the Euro by taking some necessary austerity measures was crucial for a range of political, economic, socio-cultural and even emotional reasons. In her speech before the German parliament, Angela Merkel (the German Chancellor) made her infamous plea for "more Europe":

> The Euro is much, much more than a currency […] If the Euro fails, then Europe fails.... It is up to us to secure the future of this success story and to leave an intact Europe to our children and grandchildren.
> (Source: *Spiegel* Online International, 07 September 2011)

This emotionally-charged and emphatic speech by the German Chancellor did not only call for immediate political action, it also empowered politicians to take full responsibility for preserving Europe. "It is up to us!" she retorts. At the same time, she was also encouraging a "united Europe" distinct from national identifications, preserving "united Europe" for future generations, emphasising the importance of stability and continuity in Europe by emotively alluding directly to politicians and their families ("to leave an intact Europe to our children and grandchildren").

The Eurozone crisis brought about an upsurge in unemployment. By 2012, the average unemployment rate exceeded 10% in 27 European states. Particularly, an increase in youth

[7] An economic condition in which investment capital is difficult to obtain. Banks and investors become wary of lending funds to corporations, which drives up the price of debt products for borrowers (source: http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/creditcrunch.asp accessed on 28/11/14)

unemployment, with "young people twice as likely to be unemployed than the adult population" (EC, 2012) was one of the key issues on the European agenda. On average, the level of youth unemployment reached 24% across the EU, while it surpassed the 40% mark in some European countries (e.g., Spain, Greece and Croatia) (see EC, 2014).

The issue of high youth unemployment was raised in the EU Youth Report (2012) as well as in a number of speeches by Androulla Vassiliou (the EU Commissioner for Youth, Education and Multilingualism):

> We live in challenging times. Youth unemployment rates have increased by more than 50% since spring 2008, with almost one in four young people in the labour market today without a job. This is more than double that of the total working population. This unacceptable situation has far-reaching social consequences for young people, who face a higher risk of falling into poverty and not being able to afford a home or establish their own family. This can have a detrimental impact on their health and well-being. If we fail to invest in young people now, the result may create a society where young people are disengaged or alienated. We have to do more for young people and with young people to improve this situation. Mobilising all policy areas that have an impact on young people, at different levels of governance, and developing cross-sectoral solutions is key. At the same time however, young people should be more involved in shaping the policies that affect them.
>
> (*Youth Report*, 2012:3)

Not only did the Commissioner emphasise the seriousness of the situation, particularly that youth unemployment was at its highest level, she also pointed out the potential consequences for young people that appear to be seriously disturbing. She therefore called for immediate action both on behalf of the politicians (investing in student mobility schemes, such as *Erasmus*) as well as young people themselves (i.e., focusing on higher education and opting for student mobility).

Record high unemployment is regarded as being merely one of many EU flaws (among those that are frequently mentioned in the media, such as: the downturn in the value of the *Euro* (currency), slow economic growth, migration policies, etc.) that gave rise to "Euroscepticism". As the Eurobarometer data, illustrated in Figure 1 below, shows, there has been an

unprecedented increase in "Eurosceptics" throughout member states:

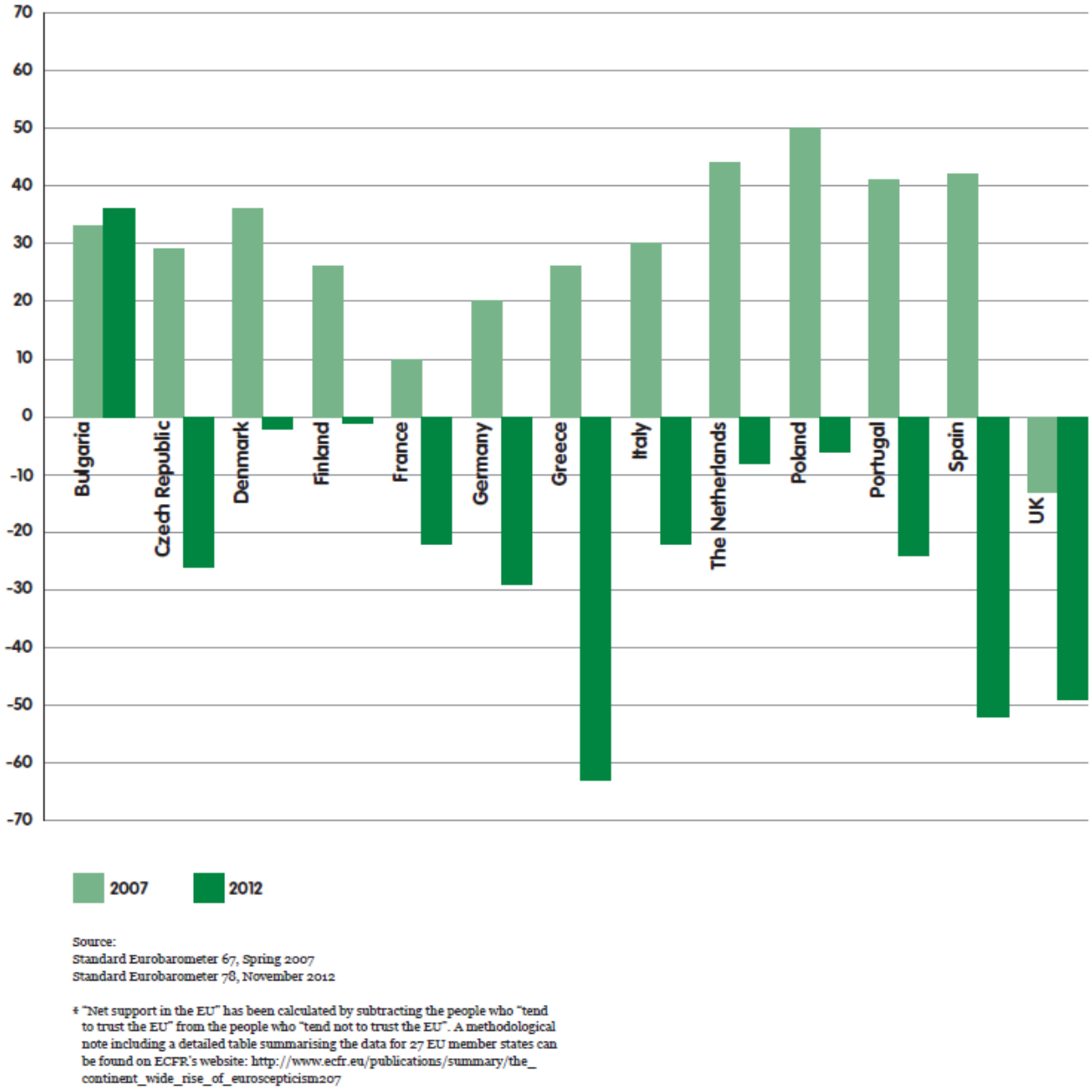

Figure 1: EU-13. Trust in the EU - Net Support* (2007-2012)

This brief overview represents the atmosphere that was present in Europe in the first decade of the twenty first century. It can be characterised by uncertainty in the future of Europe and hardships endured by many throughout Europe, an impact felt particularly by young people. This political, social and psychological atmosphere in many respects triggered the increase in

mobility inside and outside of Europe. The next section unpacks the way mobility and migration are understood and theorised in existing scholarly literature.

1.2 Migration and Mobility Today

Whereas in the past "migration" was considered to be a "finite undertaking" involving one or more individuals departing from one location and arriving at another, such a definition of migration is no longer representative of its extended meaning. This is primarily due to "migration" becoming a continuous process of movement between multiple geographical, social and/ or virtual spaces rather than a single finite experience. Thanks to advances in global transportation and communication technologies, an increasing number of migrants have developed strong transnational ties with more than just one country and one community. As the relatively recently-coined term, "transnationalism" infers, modern individuals transcend the national space, at times being affiliated to multiple locations and communities simultaneously and leading "multi-sited lives" (cf. Falzon, 2009: 165), maintaining relationships not only with immediate communities but also with communities across borders.

Today, as Europeans become mobile both physically and virtually, migration can take many shapes and guises, ranging from short to long-term, from temporary to permanent, and even entail a series of journeys to either single or multiple destinations. On the one hand, some migrants, such as tourists, backpackers, expatriates (expats), mobile students and academics, experience migration as mostly a *positive*, short or long-term experience originating from personal choice. On the other hand, for migrants, such as refugees and asylum seekers, migration is *enforced*, which can lead to a sense of trauma, caused by a struggle for survival. This is usually associated with long-term or permanent exclusion and isolation from their country of origin (Salazaar, 2010). These different circumstances shape individual experiences of mobility.

It has been argued that "migration" and "mobility" should be understood as two aspects of the same phenomenon (Salazaar, 2010). However, "migration" stands for movement outside one's country of origin into another country for various reasons, leading to long-term changes in both residence and legal status, while "mobility" entails much more than just physical movement (Marzloff, 2005). However, there is neither a single nor a universal definition of *mobility*, as it may mean different things to different people in different circumstances (Adey, 2010). At present, mobility is central to many people's lives, and in many parts of the world it is understood as "an important way of belonging to today's society" (Salazaar, 2016).

Despite its overarching positive associations, mobility may take on different meanings in different social and political settings (Wodak & van Dijk, 2000). While mobility may appear to be associated with freedom of movement and seamless, even endless possibilities, at the same time attempts to restrict free movement are just as representative of the modern age, with national policies making it more difficult for some people to travel freely. Previous research findings (Alvarez 1995; Shamir 2005; Tsing, 2005; Turner 2007) reveal that the very processes generating movement and global links are responsible for "immobility, exclusion, and disconnection" (Hannam et al., 2006). Scholars argue that the world has not become borderless and limitless for everyone and "immobility" is still very much present in today's world. Therefore, "mobility" should be understood without casting aside the different degrees of "motility" or the potential access that different individuals have to mobility (Kaufmann, 2002). For example, transnational borders are envisioned to encourage various forms of transient or potentially temporary mobility (such as, business travellers, tourists, migrant workers, students) that are seen as economically beneficial to the host country. However, the mobility of others, the more permanent/ long-term mobility of the "less desirable", deprived migrants (illegal migrants, refugees), is obstructed or discouraged. This indicates that "mobilities are also caught

up in power geometries of everyday life" (Massey, 1994), where not everyone has readily available access to mobility.

Mobility scholars, therefore, emphasise that although there are new places and technologies that boost the mobility of some people and places, it comes at the price of immobility of others, which is particularly salient in the case of border crossing (cf. Timothy, 2001; Verstraete, 2004; Wood & Graham, 2006).

1.2.1 Migration and Mobility in Latvia

Latvia is a typical case among other Central and Eastern European countries, which has experienced large-scale emigration over the past two decades. Since Latvia joined the EU in 2004, well over 300 000 Latvian citizens emigrated from Latvia for a range of reasons (e.g., education, work, etc.) and remained living abroad. High emigration rate and low birth rates due to the dire economic situation in the country had a significant impact on the demographics of Latvia, as the population dropped below 2 million mark (CSB, 2015).

To-date, Latvia remains emigration-depleted, impoverished by the effects of economic crisis, which may be among the major reasons why particularly young Latvians decide to seek study and work opportunities abroad. Neoliberal tendencies that emerged in Latvia since joining the EU in 2004 have encouraged many people to see themselves as "choosers" (Brooks & Waters, 2011:31), or successful individuals, who can make choices with regard to developing their career or gaining better education opportunities in a country of their choice.

Students and highly skilled individuals are regarded as particularly valuable to a developing country, such as Latvia. Therefore, it is this group of Latvian emigrants that has been targeted by different government initiatives to encourage their return following their work and/or study abroad. For instance, in 2015, Latvian government introduced policies to encourage young educated Latvians to return to their home country and contribute to the

development of Latvia's economy by offering work placements at state institutions (Lulle & Buzinska, 2017). This, as Lulle & Buzinska's (2017) study of Latvian diaspora in the UK shows, has created a rising tension between the materialistic advantages and better career prospects found abroad as opposed to the sense of obligation to return to the country of origin. These tensions between the lack of opportunities as regards study or work in Latvia and better opportunities abroad, sometimes have determined individuals' decisions to move abroad for a long-term or permanently. Therefore, study or work mobility in Latvian official and institutional discourses appears to be linked to a negative value attributed to "foreign-earned cultural capital" (cf. Erel, 2010: 648) and be regarded as a "brain drain" (ibid.) rather than an asset to the country.

1.2 The 'New Mobilities' Paradigm

The overall impact of "mobility" on modern life is convincingly emphasised by Urry (2007) and his associates who also suggest it is a key concern for the social sciences of today. They point out the importance of developing theoretical approaches, which are sensitive to the wide range of issues relating to mobility. In fact, it has been argued by Sheller & Urry (2006) and Urry (2007) that the social sciences need to start thinking through a "mobilities lens". These scholars refer to the current changes as a "mobility turn" that is spreading into and transforming the social sciences, not only by presenting new issues to be looked at but also by moving beyond the disciplinary boundaries and readdressing the fundamental "territorial" and "sedentary" issues. Therefore, "the new mobilities paradigm" (Sheller & Urry, 2006) has been formed within the social sciences, which asserts that all places are interconnected as a set of varied networks, having more or less noticeable impact on each other, while carrying wider implications for the rest of the world (ibid., 4). Thus, no place can be "an island" separate from

the influence of other places and communities. That is to say, the claim to a new mobilities paradigm encourages researchers to view mobility as a part of a broader picture aimed at going beyond the notion of "terrains" as "geographical containers" fixed in time and space, restricted by local/global rhetoric (Tsing, 2005: 472). Drawing on this assertion, Sheller & Urry (2006: 210) explain that the new mobilities paradigm outlines the context in which both "sedentary" and "nomadic accounts" of the social world function and it questions the way that context is performed, through ongoing practices, of "erratic mobile worlds".

All in all, it appears that Urry (2007) invites scholars to reconsider the agenda that the social sciences are dealing with, in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between society/individuals and mobility. The mobilities framework proposed by him and his associates can offer an important reminder on an individual level of how various daily mobile practices can inform larger social practices and *vice versa*. Besides, it encourages the researcher to reconsider the role that mobility plays for different groups and its consequences for various individuals and settings (Hannam et al., 2006). Social scientists are encouraged to remain open towards the differences in the ways mobilities are expressed, experienced and fused with social life today, particularly in the cases where mobility *is* an option.

1.3 Overview of Research on Mobility Today

The *new mobilities paradigm* has attracted a great deal of interest among scholars (e.g. Hannam et al., 2006, Sheller & Urry, 2006; Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2004; Germann Molz, 2006; Sparke, 2005; 2006; Levitt & Waters, 2003; Silvey, 2004; Freeman, 2005; Mohammad, 2005; Freudendal-Pedersen, 2009; Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2011; Sheller, 2013; Sheller & Urry, 2016). There is much research that touches upon mobility, movement, paths and routes in disciplines as varied as linguistics, human and cultural geography, anthropology and psychology. This growing interest is also reflected in the

publication of a new academic journal *Mobilities*, (2006-present). As the Editors describe it, the breadth of this journal includes: "studies of corporeal movement, transportation and communications infrastructures, capitalist spatial restructuring, migration and immigration, citizenship and transnationalism, and tourism and travel" (Hannam *et al*., 2006: 9–10). Not only does the wide scope of this research field does not only include mobility across a wide range of forms, practices, locations and technologies, but it also raises the issues of the politics of mobility and immobility, their contexts, and the representational/ non-representational work that takes place.

Thus far, the greatest body of social mobility research has looked at a range of settings and contexts (cf. Sheller and Urry, 2006; 2016), including, for example, the issues concerning 'mobility within mobility', or in other words, *touristic experiences of modern migrants and return migration of first/second/third generation of migrants* (cf. Levitt & Waters, 2002; Silvey, 2005; Freeman, 2005; Mohammad, 2005), *the experiences of highly skilled workers* (*mobile professionals* and *expatriates*) (Walters, 2004; Wood, 2004; Sparke, 2005; 2006), *backpackers and round-the world travellers* (cf. Richards & Wilson, 2004; Germann Molz, 2006) , the daily reality of the *'lifestyle migrants'* (cf. Benson & O'Reilly, 2009;), as well as *short and long term academic and student mobility* (including Erasmus), suggesting that what all these forms of mobility seem to share is their desire for or pursuit of a new way of life elsewhere. As regards the research concerning "mobility within mobility", while research on migration and migrants' experiences is vast, until recently migrants' tourist travel and the occasional 'return journeys' for holidays and for special events have been somewhat overlooked (cf. Hannam et al., 2006). The researchers working on migration and diasporas have only recently started to examine how leisure travel is significant for repeated return and reunion journeys for "displaced" people who often have strong affiliations in various places (Coles & Timothy, 2004). Mobility for these people could be better described as "a two-way journey

between two sets of 'homes'" (Condon & Ogden, 1996; Baldassar, 2001), as opposed to what in the past was understood as a single journey, leaving one's homeland and loved ones behind (Hoffman, 1989). The fact that migrants keep their bond with the country of origin has also been recognised by Tolia-Kelly (2006) who observed that when moving from one place to another they carry with them some local artefacts, all of which are brought and introduced to the new place, reconfiguring the new space too.

In the case of some skilled professionals (i.e., mobile professionals, expatriates, or privileged migrants) mobility opens up career opportunities to pursue in another country, normally within large corporations. Beaverstock (2002: 525) claimed that skilled international migration is closely linked with "fundamental globalization process" as many global cities require an international labour force that has specific knowledge, skills and networks, which has triggered the growing numbers of expatriates traversing the world. Their experiences have been described as "a journey both in space (inward/outward) and through time (backward/forward) with openings for new translations" (Wåhlin, 2006: 274). Wåhlin succinctly captures the experience of mobility for highly skilled professionals, suggesting that while people move out of one country and enter another, they continuously draw comparisons between their home environment and the new home environment, while developing new interpretations resulting from this.

Scholars working within an international community of mobile professionals point out that their experience abroad is complicated among other factors by the initial reasons for leaving the home country, the ease of acculturation into the host country, feelings of nostalgia, loneliness and the ability to remain in touch with their country of origin while abroad (Beaverstock, 2002; Thieme, 2008; Butcher, 2010). Earlier research suggests that such personal skills as adaptability to the new environment and communicative skills play a crucial role in the degree of comfort the expatriates experience while abroad (Butcher, 2010). This idea is also

supported by Fugate et al.,(2004) who place an emphasis on the need for expatriates and mobile professionals to be "highly adaptable" (p.15) due to the very dynamic nature of the environment they enter.

Apart from mobile professionals, increasingly more and more people take the time and the opportunity to travel for longer periods of time. Over a few decades, another "elite", namely backpackers or long-term independent travellers, have shaped our current understanding of "mobility" from being a marginal activity to becoming *a rite of passage*, commonly associated with the freedom of youth, personal development and self-fulfilment. Jaworski & Pritchard (2005) list a few reasons why modern individuals embark on long-term mobility, ranging from a "gap year" for young people before further study or work to someone resorting to it as an escape from personal problems and responsibilities.

Some scholars claim that travelling from one place to another, as is the case with backpackers and round the world travellers, is triggered by the underlying desire for something out of the ordinary (D'Andrea, 2006) as well as the pursuit of authenticity in the Other and the search for the authentic Self through new experiences (ibid.). These individuals are not merely characterized by being extremely mobile or "hypermobile" in geographical terms but, above all, they have been described as hypermobile in mental and physical terms (cf. O'Regan, 2008: 109).

In fact, their ability to travel freely and affordably and communicate with virtually anyone at any time and from anywhere is found to have an impact on their self-perception and the type of relations they have with other people. As hypermobility implies living within and managing multiple mobilities (i.e., physical travel, physical movement of objects, imaginative travel, virtual travel and communicative travel cf. Larsen et al., 2006: 263), backpackers' lifestyle, for instance, does not allow for any long-term relationships to be established locally. Thus, these travellers resort to "cocooning" (Carducci, 2000), using the Internet to commute

virtually to their home, and to maintain strong connections with their families and close friends. This may eventually lead to what Moorehead & Christie (2002:3) describe as "annihilation of physical distance" and development of the sense that, no matter where one goes, one has never really left.

Several scholars have claimed that for a small number of long-term travellers, involvement in backpacking may become a way of life (Noy & Cohen, 2005; Welk, 2004; Westerhausen, 2002). Cohen (2011) refers to those travellers as "lifestyle travellers", who turn their episodic backpacking to a mobile everyday experience, unlike the backpackers for whom mobility is more of a transitional phase in life (Maoz & Bekerman, 2010). In a broader sense, lifestyle travel can assume such different forms of mobility as backpacking, ocean yacht cruising (Macbeth, 2000) or caravanning (White & White, 2004). What makes these forms of travel different from other lifestyle choices is their ongoing autonomous physical mobility that on a micro level equips an individual with a distinct sense of self, while on a macro level involves the construction of a unique social identity (see Cohen, 2011:1535), as the lifestyle traveller has numerous loose identifications with different groups that s/he has come into contact with at various stages of their travel.

Another type of modern travellers, whose motivation and context of travel differs from that of refugees, backpackers, tourists or expatriates, is *a mobile student* or an exchange student. Due to exchange students' transitional status and absence from their home country, Murphy-Lejeune (2008:10) suggests viewing mobile students as belonging to an albeit temporary political category that she terms as "non-nationals" or as having a different nationality. Murphy-Lejeune (ibid.) highlights the difference of exchange students' status as "non-nationals" when compared to other migrants, pointing out the need for a new understanding of migration that does not have to be examined from the point of view of the host community, as it excludes either the need for integration of the newcomers or the conflicting perceptions of

the migrants among the local community members. This is primarily true because a lot of the issues commonly associated with the experience of migration (e.g., local language acquisition, employment, socialization, etc.) are not applicable in the context of student mobility, where exchange students are only temporary visitors, or "passing strangers" (Dervin, 2011:72) and remain very marginal in the host country within the fixed institutional context of the exchange programme.

Moreover, due to the very nature of the exchange, Erasmus students remain a type of "tourist"; in Bauman's (1996:29) terms: "*in* but not *of* the place they are in". Namely, while the mobile students are physically present in the host country, they do not really belong there, as their degree of exposure to the local community and practices is limited for a number of reasons e.g. temporary status, little or no knowledge of the local language, specially designed courses, and accommodation, which sets them apart from the local community (Kalocsai, 2009; Coleman, 2006; 2014; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001).

In fact, travelling students' circumstances can be regarded as privileged. Compared to those moving more permanently, they can travel more lightly, while being supported by available funding and enjoying the comfort of the international student community, to whom they are exposed to from the very beginning of the stay. Their mobility experience is consequently less intense or traumatic than that of the migrants. As a result, it appears that due to the short-lived nature of their "in-between position", any difficulties that mobile students experience, by comparison with those of a migrant or an expat, are likely to be fleeting rather than lasting (cf. Murphy-Lejeune, 2001:232).

The continuously growing numbers of travelling students have made this group more salient, particularly in modern European universities. Although student mobility has existed for centuries, only from the early 20th century, different forms of study abroad became institutionalised within formal higher education (de Wit & Merkx, 2012). Today, millions of

students spend part or all of their studies in a different country and acquire to a greater or lesser extent new language skills, alongside new academic knowledge, and interpersonal and inter-cultural skills (Banks & Bhandari, 2012).

The global popularisation of student mobility over the last 25 years can be traced chronologically as a steadily increasing trend. While in 1987, only 300 universities exchanged 3,000 students; in 2004, around 2.5 million students from more than 1,500 universities worldwide were studying in a country other than their own (Murphy-Lejeune, 2008:21) with more than half of the world's mobile students enrolled in European universities (Teichler, 2003). In 2009, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development there were 3.7 million mobile students, which means an increase of 77% since 2000 (cf. OECD, 2011). The more recent ICEF Monitor (2015) statistics show that the number of students worldwide studying in a country other than their own has exceeded the five million mark. This impressive figure shows that the number of internationally mobile students has more than tripled since 1990, when there were only 1.3 million international students worldwide. The current five million figure represents an increase of nearly 67% from the three million students studying abroad in 2005, with an average annual growth of 7% per year between 2000 and 2012[8]. The OECD[9] forecasts that the world's population of internationally mobile students will continue to grow and may reach eight million by 2025.

According to the OECD (2014) report, Europe, which hosts 48% of mobile students, is the top destination for students at the tertiary level of education enrolled outside their country of origin. Probably the main reason why Europe attracts so many mobile students is the availability of funding for university students and academic staff to study abroad. The EU-

[8] ICEF Monitor (2015a) Four trends that are shaping the future of the global student mobility. Published online on : http://monitor.icef.com/2015/09/four-trends-that-are-shaping-the-future-of-global-student-mobility/ (accessed on 07.07.2016)

[9] OECD (2014) Education at a glance. Published online on: http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG2014-Indicator%20C4%20%28eng%29.pdf (accessed on 07.07.2016)

funded ERASMUS+ programme is among the most successful schemes in Europe that makes student and academic mobility a reality.

Although these figures appear to be very impressive, they still represent only a minority of university students. According to OECD (2013) statistics, less than one in 40 global students is mobile, while in Europe mobile students represent merely 0.96% of the whole (European) student population. Student mobility remains very much "conditioned and constrained by the regional and international political and economic relations of power" (Kim, 2009: 387). For a European citizen it is fairly easy to study in another European country, either an *exchange* (doing a *part* of the degree in another country) or a *degree student* (doing the *whole* degree in another country), while it might be significantly more difficult for the same individual to study outside Europe (e.g., in North America or Japan) (Coleman, 2014; Teichler, 2015). That is not to mention the struggle of "the illegal academic movers" (Dervin, 2011:2).

Nevertheless, being a salient social and educational phenomenon, "student mobility" has captured the attention of scholars from a wide range of disciplines, such as linguistics, education policy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, gender studies, human geography and many more (e.g. Papatsiba, 2006; Dervin, 2011; Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013; Kinginger, 2013; Coleman, 2014; Van Mol, 2014). This may be a possible reason why different terms that have been used to refer to educational mobility. These include: student mobility, study abroad, international students, residence abroad, *séjour à l'étranger*, *Auslandsaufenthalt*, *Estancia en el extranjero*, academic mobility, sojourn, etc. (Coleman, 2006: 37). Due to its suitability to the context of the present study, here the term "student mobility" is used as in Murphy-Lejeune (2001) to mean a specific type of migration, in which students travel in order to pursue academic programmes of study in Universities abroad for a fixed period of time, based on the agreements established between partner universities.

However, different meanings may be ascribed to "student mobility" in Europe as opposed to North America. While in Europe, student mobility has become almost synonymous with the Erasmus programme, in North America, where there is a wider diversity of student mobility programmes, "study abroad" could mean anything ranging from a brief study tour of a few weeks up to two months. Apart from the duration of study abroad, many aspects of its set up (e.g., accommodation, the programme set up, etc.) and objectives (e.g., language learning) differ on the two sides of the Atlantic (see Bolen, 2007).

Student Mobility scholars do not always share the same stance with regard to the pros and cons of student mobility. This is why student mobility has received praise and has at times been "fetishized" (Robertson, 2010), while on other occasions it has been criticized (Schulmeister & Metzger, 2011). Nonetheless, student mobility has continued to be popular and has already become part of the "complex interdependencies between and social consequences of the diverse mobilities"[10] that characterise the times we live in (Urry, 2010: 348), where "inner mobility" (coming and going, being here and there at the same time) has become more common (ibid.), transforming the notion of "abroad" to seem "less of abroad" because of continuous virtual or physical mobility, compared to five or ten years ago (Coleman, 2014).

[10] "the diverse mobilities" in Urry's (2010:348) article refers to the movement of "peoples, objects, images, information, and wastes".

Summary

All in all mobilities research today is vast. This section selectively reviewed research which illustrates seminal and state-of-the-art work in the field of mobility, reviewing chronologically earlier studies of "people mobility" (Urry, 2010) and outlining their key findings, as well as the "new mobilities" in order to establish some of the emerging themes, subsequently taken up in later research on student mobility. In the following chapter, one specific type of mobility, the European student mobility, is explored in more detail.

Chapter 2: European Student Mobility

> "Erasmus programme - the biggest and most successful student exchange scheme in the world."
>
> A. Vassiliou (2012:3)
> European Commissioner for Education,
> Culture, Multilingualism, Youth and Sport

Student mobility may seem to be a novel phenomenon, though the idea of a university as "a place of teaching and learning open to all" (Byram & Dervin, 2008:1) dates back several hundreds and even thousands of years. For instance, the Japanese have been studying abroad for almost two millennia (cf. Coleman, 2006), while in Europe, (which claims to have invented the university system eight hundred years ago), it has been the norm for centuries that scholars, resorting to Latin as a *lingua franca*, should learn and teach in several countries (ibid.). The scholarly tradition in the European context goes back to the seventeenth century Grand Tour (i.e., the traditional trip around Europe), which at the time became popularised, though reserved primarily for the sons of well-off aristocrats. The Grand Tour was meant to expose travelling scholars to the cultural legacy of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, as well as to introduce them to the elite of European society, thereby completing the education of a gentleman.

The tradition of studying abroad continues today, and it has become much more accessible, particularly in Europe with the help of the ERASMUS programme for people from almost all walks of life. In order to illustrate the context of the present research, this chapter offers an overview of the ERASMUS programme. It sums up the programme's origins, facts and practical aspects, the official goals of the programme, its impact on Erasmus students, while also reviews existing studies of student mobility across different scientific fields and providing an explanation of the construct of "the Erasmus student".

2.1 The origins of the Erasmus programme

Over the last two decades, global student mobility has increased dramatically. Interest in promoting academic, cultural, social and political links among different countries has grown, while the transportation costs have dropped and the EU has made various sources of funding for studying abroad more readily available. The EU cooperation in the field of educational mobility has become possible, owing to the success of the ERASMUS (an acronym for **E**u**R**opean Community **A**ction **S**cheme for the **M**obility of **U**niversity **S**tudents), the largest student mobility scheme in Europe for the promotion of "temporary", "horizontal" (Teichler, 2015: 18), "organized" (Szarka, 2003)[11] student mobility.

It should be noted that ERASMUS is not only an acronym for the source of funding for academic and student mobility, but also a backronym, as it is a tribute to a native of Rotterdam (*Erasmus Desiderius*, 1465-1536), a humanist and theologian, mostly known as an opponent of dogmatism (Mangan, 2003). His academic life involved travel for teaching and study in Paris and Basel, Cambridge and Turin (Coleman, 1996) in pursuit of "the knowledge, experience and insights which only such contacts with other countries could bring"[12], as the European Commission explains on the ERASMUS official homepage. Having left his fortune to the University of Basel, Erasmus of Rotterdam became a predecessor of modern day mobility grants.

[11] *Horizontal mobility* means that students move between countries and institutions of a similar academic level, learning from valuable contrasts between the countries and universities, as opposed to *vertical mobility,* which means that students move from an academically and economically less favourable country or university, to a more favourable country and university (Szarka, 2003; Teichler, 2003; 2015). Another distinction is made between *temporary mobility* (or *credit mobility*) as opposed to *degree mobility*, where the former refers to a maximum of one year of study (*short term*) and the latter to a complete course of study leading to a degree (*long term*) (Szarka, 2003:123; Techler, 2015:18). Referring to mobility in education, such terms as *spontaneous*, as opposed to *organized mobility* are also used, where the former is taken to refer to students registered at a foreign university under standard procedures and not through any organized programmes, while the latter refers to mobility supported by educational programmes (e.g., ERASMUS).

[12] http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/history_en.htm (accessed 05.12.2012)

However, student mobility or educational matters were not on the agenda of the founders of the European Community until 1974, when the First Action Programme in the field of Education was adopted by the European Council and the Ministers of Education. The main aims of the First Action Programme were related to the development of high-quality education for all as well as the development of multicultural and multilingual Europe, marked by mobility that cultivates "the feeling of being European" (Commission of the European Communities, 1993:10). Following this Action Programme, some pilot exchanges were funded by the European Commission between 1981 and 1986, leading to mixed reactions between the participating European countries.

Nevertheless, in 1984, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe encouraged the Member States to promote study abroad as part of their educational policies, and to facilitate student mobility among the participating European countries by issuing grants (Council of Europe, 1984). The following year, *the Adonnino report*, submitted to the European Council in Milan served as a starting point for the development of the Erasmus Programme as it is known today. The Adonino report called for cooperation and mobility in higher education via a comprehensive European inter-university programme of exchanges that would be accessible to a wide student population. It also suggested introducing a transferable European system of academic credits (European Academic Credit Transfer System) (Adonnino Committee, 1985), allowing for Erasmus programme to be launched in 1987.

The EC's main motivation for increasing European student mobility was to promote a sense of European identity among the Europeans. As the founding document of the Council of Ministers (1987) reveals, the ERASMUS programme was meant to contribute to the exposure of young Europeans to living and studying in another Member State. By introducing them to the idea of living together and working towards the common goals, the Commission anticipated the creation of a process of European integration. It was assumed that in the future the graduates

with personal experience of life in another European country would be more willing to cooperate with people across the borders.

It was expected that the study abroad experience would allow students to meet other Europeans, which in turn would encourage a sense of a "People's Europe". Shore (2000) claimed that the creation of a "People's Europe" was a euphemism for a common European identity and culture, in order to promote identification with Europe as a whole. With regard to student mobility, Adonnino (1985:25) claimed that indeed "action at Community level to encourage exchanges of young people between different Member States helps to promote the identity of Europe for young Europeans". Sigalas (2010:245) supports this claim, maintaining that "the conceptual link between ERASMUS and European identity remains alive".

Since 1987, the programme has undergone a number of changes and transformations. In 1993, the Commission of the European Communities issued a Green Paper on the European dimension of Education. The authors of Green Paper argued that the goal of education is to prepare young people to live, work and interact across the European community (see Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 3). From that time on, education and educational mobility became an important issue on the European agenda.

A few years later, following the meeting of the European Ministers of Education in Bologna in 1999, the foundations of a *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA) were laid by establishing what is known today as the *Bologna Process*[13]. The main aim behind the Bologna process was to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education across Europe, such as the division into undergraduate and postgraduate studies (Bachelors, Masters and PhD or "3+2+3") and the widespread use of the common European Credit Transfer

[13] The Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area *Source* : http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en.htm (accessed on 23/08/2016)

Scheme (ECTS) in order to facilitate student mobility in Europe (i.e., degree and credit compatibility and transparency).

As the result of political, economic, social and educational changes since the programme was first launched, ERASMUS has undergone various stages of development and re-branding. Together with a number of other education and training programmes, ERASMUS was incorporated into the SOCRATES Programme, launched in 1995, to be replaced by SOCRATES – ERASMUS II in 2000, which in turn was replaced by *Lifelong Learning Programme* (2007 – 2013), together with ERASMUS MUNDUS (2004-2008 and extended to 2009-2013) in addition to *Lifelong Learning Programme*, which offered scholarships and encouraged academic cooperation at postgraduate level (Masters and PhD) between the EU member states and the rest of the world. In 2014, in a follow up to the Lifelong Learning Programme, the European Commission launched a new programme, "Erasmus +" or "Erasmus Plus" that will last until 2020.

2.2. The ERASMUS programme today

Since 1987, ERASMUS has grown to become one of "the best-known and largest exchange programmes in the world" (European Union, 2012f:8). Having reached an age that is older than the average Erasmus student, the programme has become much more than "a political initiative or educational opportunity: it's a brand and a symbol" of successful cooperation between European Member States (Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013:11). Erasmus has had a positive impact on many higher education institutions (HEI) in Europe and beyond as well as on the mobility of European students, leading to the internationalization of education and improvement of the higher education system across Europe (European Union, 2012f:6).

Even though the EU has not yet reached its ambition of involving 20% of all European university students, the number of mobile students has grown significantly (see above and

European Commission, 2015a). Moreover, these figures are expected to increase further, as the result of the new "Erasmus +" programme, with the allocated budget of €14.7 billion, that should enable 4 million people (which is almost twice as many as in the previous ERASMUS programmes)[14] to embark on one of the various forms of academic or student mobility. As the title of the new programme suggests, unlike the previous programmes, Erasmus+ has a broader scope and has become not only open to the European students travelling within the institutional and political borders of the European Union, but also to the students from outside the EU who wish to study in a European university[15].

The *objectives* of Erasmus+ include: tackling the rising levels of unemployment (especially among young people); making Europe more cohesive and inclusive by encouraging its citizens to play an active role in democratic life; promoting common European values, fostering social integration, enhancing intercultural understanding and developing a sense of belonging to a community; and promoting the inclusion of people with disadvantaged backgrounds (especially newly arrived migrants), in response to critical events affecting European countries (European Commission, 2016c:10). It is assumed that this investment in knowledge, skills and competences will benefit not only individuals, but will also have a positive effect on higher educational institutions, various organisations involved in educational mobility as well as society as a whole by "contributing to growth and ensuring equity, prosperity and social inclusion in Europe and beyond" (ibid.).

To achieve these objectives, the ERASMUS programme aims to promote various forms of educational mobility, predominantly within Europe, for periods between three months and a year, within the networks of partner universities (European University Charter[16]) and providing

[14] http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/key-figures/index_en.htm (accessed on 12/10/2015)
[15] List of all the EU/non-EU countries eligible for Erasmus grant http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en#tab-1-1 (18/07/2016)
[16] Erasmus Charter Holder's List 2014-2020 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/heis_awarded_with_the_erasmus_charter.pdf (accessed on 25/07/2016)

support on various aspects of living, studying and/or working while in the host country. By providing funding, ERASMUS encourages student mobility via development of joint curriculum between different partner universities, offering intensive language courses to exchange students, and the transferability of the ECTS, which ensures the academic recognition of courses undertaken abroad.

2.3 ERASMUS and student mobility in Latvia

As the empirical data for the present study was collected in Latvia, this section will briefly outline the context of this host country (Latvia) and the setting of the two major Latvian universities, Riga Technical University and University of Latvia, from which data was elicited.

Latvia is a relatively small country in north-eastern Europe, on the shores of the Baltic sea, bordering with Lithuania, Estonia, Russia and Belarus. In the early 2000's Latvia became a member of the EU, which has helped its popularization worldwide as a new potential market and an affordable new tourist destination. Nevertheless, compared to many other European countries, Latvia remains relatively unknown. This may explain the reason why the number of exchange students in Latvia is considerably lower than in other European countries where, the in-coming students are counted in the tens of thousands, while the numbers of incoming exchange students in Latvia just exceeds 1,000 students. The official statistics about Erasmus mobility, published by the European Commission for 2013/2014, revealed that Spain welcomed 39,277 students, Germany about 30, 964, France 29,621 and United Kingdom 27,401 students, while only 1, 231 students arrived in Latvia[17]. Among the reasons for the lower number of incoming exchange students, compared to other EU countries, may be the lack of internationally available information about the exchange programmes offered by Latvian universities, as well as the relatively limited choice of subjects with English as the main

[17] http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/statistics_en.htm (accessed on 18/07/2016)

language of instruction. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe a significant increase in the number of incoming students, based on the EU statistics. Their overall numbers have tripled from 392 students in 2007/08 to 1,231 in 2013/14[18].

The two major Latvian universities included in the Erasmus University Charter (*The University of Latvia*, Latvijas Universitāte and *Riga Technical University*, Rigas Tehniskā Universitāte), actively engage in student mobility in Latvia and have become the top two ERASMUS sending and receiving universities in Latvia[19]. For instance, the University of Latvia has signed agreements with over 450 higher educational institutions in 33 European countries[20]. Riga Technical University cooperates with more than 200 European universities realising the Erasmus student mobility[21]. The majority of incoming Erasmus exchange students at Latvian universities come from Germany, Spain, Lithuania, France and Portugal[22]. Usually they are offered specially designed courses run in English as the main medium of instruction and additionally the courses introducing them to the Latvian and Russian (widely spoken in Latvia) languages.

In Latvia, just as in other countries and universities that take part in ERASMUS, during their stay, exchange students are supported by a local branch of ESN (Erasmus Student Network)[23], set up by former Erasmus students in 1989. The main focus of ESN is placed on current exchange students, who may experience difficulties in their new environment. Therefore, ESN assist them with academic, social and practical issues that Erasmus students may experience while in the host country. They usually do this by offering a range of activities, which include cultural and social events such as trips to various places within the host country and/or neighbouring countries, film nights, language projects, international food festivals as

[18] http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/statistics_en.htm (accessed on 26/07/2016)
[19] http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/statistics/2014/latvia_en.pdf (accessed 25/07/2016)
[20] LU Erasmus + http://www.lu.lv/eng/general/about-university-of-latvia/studies/ (accessed 06/02/2016)
[21] RTU Erasmus + http://www.rtu.lv/content/view/368/2239/lang,lv/ (accessed 23/08/2016)
[22] http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/statistics/2014/latvia_en.pdf (accessed on 28/07/2016)
[23] *What is ESN?* Retrieved from http://esn.lv/what-esn-0 on 27/07/2016

well as parties. In addition to that, the Latvian section of ESN organisation has introduced "buddy" or mentor systems, where former local Erasmus students help the current Erasmus students mainly to deal with academic and practical issues, allowing for a more personal approach.

The next section will present an overview of emerging representations of ERASMUS programme from three different perspectives: institutional, media and scholarly work, outlining the research lacuna in existing scholarly literature.

2.4 ERASMUS: Institutional, Media and Scholarly Representations

It seems that the current representation of what the ERASMUS programme is and what impact it has on young Europeans who experience it, comes predominantly from three sources: a) *institutional*, drawing on the EU statistics and surveys open to public access (e.g., European Commission's Erasmus+ website[24], and Statistics and Findings of ERASMUS impact studies[25]); b) *media* – online communities, films and series about ERASMUS experience; c) *scholars*' publications about this group (e.g., Beaven, 2012; Coleman, 2006; 2014; Dervin, 2007; 2011; Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013; Mitchell, 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; 2008; Papatsiba, 2006; Sigalas, 2009; Van Mol, 2013; 2014). By reviewing these three sources, I will try to reconstruct existing representations of the ERASMUS programme and students that emerge from the different data available.

The main concern of European institutions with regard to student mobility to date have mostly been related to cost-efficiency of the programme as well as adaptation of the European

[24] European Commission's Erasmus+ website https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en (accessed on 27/07/2016)
[25] Statistics and Findings of ERASMUS impact studies http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/statistics_en.htm (accessed on 27/07/2016)

policy regarding student and labour mobility. Therefore, the studies carried out by the institutions involved in student exchange have mostly been quantitative in nature (i.e., in the form of surveys), aiming to illustrate the socio-economic backgrounds of the participants, and/or the effect of Erasmus on the participants' future employability (see Teichler, 2004; Beerkens & Vossensteyn, 2011).

Thus, according to the 2013-2014 statistics evident from the European Commission's Erasmus+ homepage, a "typical Erasmus student" is a 23 year old female, as 61% of Erasmus students are women, who spend six months studying abroad, predominantly following undergraduate studies, with 70% of students taking Bachelor level courses, 29% Master level courses and only 1% Doctoral level courses. The majority, or 31% of all Erasmus students, are Social sciences, Business or Law degree students, followed by 17 % of students who engage in Humanities and Art degrees and a further 17% who follow Engineering degree programmes, 11% of all Erasmus students undertake a Health degree and the remaining 24% are dispersed between different degree programmes[26]. These figures are based on 272,497 people who experienced Erasmus mobility in 2013-2014.

Another publicly available statistical resource published by the European Commission is the *Erasmus Impact Study* (2014)[27]. This publication analyses the impact of ERASMUS on the students from across Europe, and lists Erasmus students' main motivating factors for studying abroad as: the opportunity to live in another country and meet new people; to improve foreign language proficiency and develop transversal skills[28] and to a lesser extent to enhance their employability abroad. The study confirms that compared to non-mobile students, Erasmus students appear to be in a better position with regard to employment following their stay abroad

[26] Typical Erasmus Student http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/statistics_en.htm (accessed on 27/07/2016)
[27] *Erasmus Impact Study* (2014) http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact-summary_en.pdf
[28] Such as "openness to and curiosity about new challenges, problem-solving and decision-making skills, confidence, tolerance towards other personal values and behaviours" (*Erasmus Impact Study*, 2014:4).

than their non-mobile counterparts. This resonates with the employers' expectations, as the study claims that 92% of employers consider transversal skills, acquired as the result of living and studying abroad, to be important recruitment criteria. Besides, the ERASMUS experience appears to encourage young people to be mobile and lead an international lifestyle also following their experience, as 93% of Erasmus students claimed that they can imagine living and/ or working abroad in the future. Thus, it appears that ERASMUS has a political, economic but also social impact on Europe, transforming the European society from the bottom up (by affecting the students themselves).

It seems that the community of Erasmus students could be representative of a whole "Erasmus generation", the term first coined by Stefan Wolff, a Professor from the University of Bath (Benhold, 2005). In an interview with a journalist from *the New York Times*, Stefan Wolff claimed that the notion of the "Erasmus generation" has to do with bringing people from different parts of Europe together, thereby creating a new socialisation pattern. The effect of the "Erasmus generation" can already be observed but will emerge further over time, creating political leaders, business leaders, people working in civil society, those who move not only within the European borders but also outside of Europe, and work internationally, promoting the idea of the European project[29].

In the meantime, the term "Erasmus generation" has been widely popularized by social scientists, politicians and media (Figel 2007: 6, Kuneva 2007: 3). Although the term appears to be used widely, it has hardly been specified and therefore raises a number of questions, one of which is almost synonymous with the title of a book edited by Feyen & Krzaklewska (2013), *ERASMUS Phenomenon – Symbol of a New European Generation?* However, the editors seem to incline towards a negative answer to this question, particularly because some of the characteristics valid for the Erasmus population (e.g., European-mindedness) may not be

[29] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqMiKDiiX5s (accessed on 28/07/2016)

unique to them but may be applied to the sedentary (those who have not embarked on ERASMUS) young Europeans as well, regardless of whether they are students or not. Nevertheless, the editors argue that ERASMUS does encourage young people to reflect on "the way they live in the world, the way they communicate, the way they see their place in the world, and the values they believe in" (Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013:234), representing a particular lifestyle, associated with the ERASMUS experience.

The representation of the ERASMUS lifestyle and an image of a travelling European student entering an international community of young people have also made their way into a cult film by Cédric Klapisch (2002), *L'Auberge Espagnole*, which has contributed to romanticising the ERASMUS programme and students. More recently, the first documentary about the ERASMUS experience shown through the eyes of Erasmus students has been produced, *Erasmus 24 7* (2014), by Stefano De Marco & Niccolo Falsetti. By following seven ERASMUS students in seven different countries for 24 hours, the film seems to celebrate the social aspect of the programme, suggesting its key role in the exchange. Currently, a very different media project, *Erasmus Generation: The Series*[30] is underway, offering a series of documentaries, where scholars, non-/Erasmus students, EU officials and policymakers are interviewed on various aspects of ERASMUS, bringing the programme to life by offering a range of perspectives.

Media has certainly contributed to the popularization of ERASMUS as a recognizable brand and a symbol of European youths. A mere Internet search reveals that phrases like "I am Erasmus" have become "a dictum all over Europe" (Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013:11). Emergence of multiple online communities and available tools have promoted the creation and popularisation of a community of Erasmus students across Europe, allowing them to share

[30] At the moment only short previews are available on YouTube. http://www.erasmusgenerationtheseries.eu/?page_id=2759 (accessed on 28/07/2016)

personal stories and observations as well as stay in touch following their mobility experience (Beaven 2012; Colemam, 2015; Roguski, 2013).

Scholarly literature on study abroad spans such scientific disciplines as *education* and *educational policy* (Byram & Feng, 2006; Papatsiba, 2003; 2006; Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013; Teichler, 2013), *second language acquisition* (Coleman, 2006; 2013; Isabelli-Garcia, 2004; Kinginger, 2009; 2013; Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005), *intercultural communication* (Dervin, 2007, 2008; Krupnik & Krzaklewska, 2013), *political science* (Mitchell, 2012; 2015; Oborune, 2012; Sigalas, 2009), and *sociology* (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; 2008; Van Mol, 2014). Conclusions arising from the scholarly studies vary, depending on the perspective the scholars adopt.

Some earlier intercultural studies of student mobility took an interest in the process of individual adaptation in intercultural encounters, particularly those involving a "high degree of cultural distance" (Zarate, 2011). Yet the intercultural encounters of mobile European students have not attracted much attention within the discipline; possibly because dissimilarities among the Europeans were not thought to be significant enough (Billecen, 2014), therefore, the researchers did not consider that individuals could be confronted with change or striking differences (Papatsiba, 2006: 108). All in all, it appears from the existing scholarly literature on study abroad, that there is a concentration of research on mobile students in the North American context, while research on study abroad in the rest of the world has not received sufficient attention (Coleman, 2013; Papatsiba, 2006).

Over the last decade a number of studies in the social sciences have emerged, focussing on social and psychological aspects of student mobility. Social scientists point to the distinct status that Erasmus students have in the host country, compared to the local students as a result of: being on an exchange; coming from another country; studying under different conditions compared to the local students; being treated differently (being only temporary students) by the university staff and administration; usually not speaking the local language and having a pre-

set date of arrival and departure, Erasmus students are argued to lead "an extraordinary life" (Tsoukalas, 2008:132). Being free from everyday commitments and restrictions of the home country, the students engage in numerous activities that are unlike their ordinary lifestyle in their home country. Thus, virtually all Erasmus students are reported to be "*blown away* by the physical and sensual intensity" of ERASMUS experience, which has been described as "physically demanding" (Krzaklewska, 2013), yet "sensuously stimulating" (Tsoukalas, 2008:134). Different physical, cultural, social and linguistic contexts, free from the influence and control of family and friends adds to the intensity and impact of the ERASMUS experience (Tsoukalas, 2008).

Studies of the social nature of ERASMUS (Dervin, 2011; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Papatsiba, 2006; Van Mol, 2013) have shown that Erasmus students tend to socialize and form relations predominantly within their community, sometimes referred to as "Erasmus tribes" (Dervin, 2007) or the "Erasmus cocoon" (Dervin, 2008; Papatsiba, 2003:142), consisting exclusively of exchange students. Their marginal status in the host country, implied by both metaphors, seems to be promoted by the programme set up. Namely, over two-thirds of Erasmus students usually take exclusively or predominantly classes in a foreign language (mainly in English), that are specifically designed for Erasmus students only (Teichler, 2004; Dervin, 2006; Krzaklewska, 2008). Also, outside the university, many social activities (e.g., parties, travel) are organized specially for exchange students, limiting their exposure to local students or inhabitants. Besides, some studies consider that the student accommodation arrangements also play a role in promoting such marginalisation, creating "Erasmus student ghettos" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; 2008), as students are encouraged to share accommodation with other international/ exchange students.

Some studies raise concerns about the possible undesirable consequences of such 'isolation' of mobile students from the local community (de Federico de la Rúa, 2003; Dervin, 2008;

Ehrenreich, 2004; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Papatsiba, 2003). At the same time, other studies explain that socialization outside the international student community merely requires more time than is available to exchange students whilst in the host country (Coleman, 2015). Coleman (2015:43) illustrates this with the *social circles'* model, suggesting that the socialisation of Erasmus students gradually exposes them to three communities: first students' *co-nationals*, then *other foreigners* and only at a later stage to the members of the *local community*. This is not to dismiss the fact that, despite the access that each Erasmus student has to all three communities shown in the model, the individual pattern of relations between an individual and each social circle varies greatly.

In applied linguistics the main focus of student mobility research has hitherto looked at second language acquisition (SLA) during the stay abroad (Coleman, 1996; 2001; 2006; Freed, 1995; Kinginger, 2008; 2013). Language acquisition among SLA scholars used to be and is still regarded as "the most common of all anticipated learning outcomes" as well as "the principal motivation for most participants in study abroad" (Coleman, 2006: 42; 2015). Some SLA researchers even assumed that language learning was the sole reason for study abroad (Nagy et al., 2002). However, such research has been criticized for never opening "the black box" (Coleman, 2006; 2015), in other words, for disregarding a variety of events and developments in the course of study abroad that have encouraged linguistic proficiency, not to mention a range of historical, political, personal, social, psychological, intercultural and other possible factors involved.

This narrow focus may be partially due to the dominance of applied linguistic research into classroom-based language learning, which has a tendency to focus on such aspects that could be successfully taught and measured in a classroom environment (Schalich, 2015). Therefore, classroom teaching and research still favour measurable aspects of language learning, such as syntax, morphology, vocabulary and four traditional language skills (reading,

writing, speaking, listening), rather than more abstract aspects of language learning which are normally acquired over a longer period of time and outside the classroom (Kinginger, 2009; Coleman, 2015). These abstract aspects of language learning are crucial to study in the 'abroad' context and include "mastery of advanced pragmatics, sociolinguistic and sociocultural aspects of language use, prosody, as well as wider aspects of language learning process, including autonomy, identity, agency, and affect that are only possible to learn in real-world situations" (Coleman, 2015:34). Thus, "language learner" is too narrow a term to reference a mobile student, who needs to be conceived broadly as a complex individual and a "whole person" (Coleman, 2013; Kinginger, 2009; Kramsch, 2009; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007).

This is why earlier studies have been criticised (Coleman, 2015; Dervin, 2012) for their tendency to draw on generalizable quantitative data from surveys, considering it to be representative of mobile students as a group, while not paying necessary attention to the individual idiosyncrasies in response to complex and multifaceted experiences of educational mobility. For instance, such issues as the implications of being an Erasmus student for representations of identity in discourse or the extent to which the context of European student mobility influences exchange students' identity choices have not received sufficient attention among applied linguists.

2.5 Erasmus mobility and European identity

Even though social sciences have been very effective in conceptualizing and researching individual and collective identities, the processes of identity construction of European exchange students has not been sufficiently dealt with (Coleman, 2014; Dervin, 2006; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001, 2012). Earlier studies do not seem to question what migrant identities might mean, how their construction proceeds, and how their dynamics influences various patterns of group and individual identification (Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2007:97). Instead existing studies of

student mobility (as detailed above) are more often concerned with the conditions of the exchange (e.g., marginalization, cocooning) (see Papatsiba, 2003;2006) and evaluate exchange students' experience in terms of acculturation, language acquisition, etc. (e.g., Isabelli-Garcia, 2004; Kinginger, 2012; Coleman, 2014) while the speakers' discursive choices (except for Dervin, 2007), or the personal histories and their possible effect on the emerging discourses have not been taken into account. Also, the majority of earlier studies, including linguistic studies of migration (e.g. De Fina, 2003; De Fina et al., 2006), discourse and identity, have predominantly focused on long-term migration (Delanty et al., 2007; Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2007; La Barbera, 2015), rather than temporary/short term mobility, such as Erasmus student mobility.

Some scholars maintain that "student mobility" is a type of migration that has a greater effect on identity construction than regular travelling (Murphy-Lejeune 2003; King & Ruiz-Gelices 2003). As mobile students are away from their usual social and physical environment, they are more likely to be challenged to change (Schattle 2007). Free from the pressure and the responsibilities of their normal everyday life, mobile students tend to experiment with new belief systems, new ideas and elements of culture (Kaufmann, et al., 1992). Madison (2006) observes that as the students explore the new environment, they assess and question their own identities. Among the reasons why the question of identification becomes acute during the stay abroad is that Erasmus students encounter and have to deal with many different "Other" (e.g., locals, other Europeans). As a result of mobility, they become aware of their own and others' similarities and differences, which is one of the key elements of identity construction (Schlenker-Fischer, 2011). The "Other" can be the "Same" and belong to the same "in-group", or an "Other" may be a part of another "out-group". Erasmus students often strive to categorise (create representations based on national, ethnic, cultural affiliations), or "box" others, in order to make sense of differences or inconsistencies that they observe in others (Dervin, 2007). As

a result, Erasmus students have a tendency to *liquify* (recognise that a modern individual belongs to uncountable, at times temporary, communities) and *solidify* (ascribe delimited identities, form stereotypes based on national/ethnic/cultural identities) those they meet as well as themselves (Dervin, 2007). These concepts of solidity/liquidity guide the identity construction process in discourses of Erasmus students (Dervin, *ibid*.).

A number of scholars have questioned the correlation between student mobility and "European identity" (e.g., Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013; Mitchell, 2012; 2014; Sigalas, 2009; Van Mol, 2014;). The scholarly literature concerned with the issue of European identity is vast (e.g. Pearce & Wodak, 2010; Wodak, 2007a; Kryzanowski, 2010; Zappettini, 2016), yet it is not founded on a unified definition of the concept that is broadly recognised among the researchers (see van Mol, 2011; 2013). There are a number of on-going debates among academics, politicians, as well as in the media, questioning even the very existence of 'European identity' (Mitchell, 2012:491). However, some scholars have taken a more affirmative stance towards European identity, claiming that it has gradually emerged over the last decades and continues to evolve today, emphasising that more and more individuals have started to invoke 'Europe' into their understanding of identity (Bruter, 2005, Green, 2007, Risse, 2010).

Although, what exactly is meant by 'European identity' remains vague, the idea of unity associated with it, as Stråth (2002) explains, arises in a number of official EC (European Commission) documents, as they place an emphasis on European identity as a "cultural entity" with common values and culture. Such an understanding of European identity raises a number of questions with regard to the fact that modern Europeans differ greatly, as regards their ethnicity, languages that they speak, cultural practices they follow, political affiliation they have, etc. Thus, European identity cannot be understood as "a phenomenon in an essentialist sense" (Stråth, 2000:14) due to the tremendous diversity present in Europe, including:

> different historical traditions, different nation-states with their respective histories, different cultures, different languages, different political, national, regional and local interests and traditional ideologies, different interest lobbies, different economic concepts, different organizations, etc."
>
> (Wodak, 2007:58)

Wodak emphasises the diversity present in many spheres of life, linking it not only to the immediate circumstances but also to the past (e.g., traditions accumulated through history; political history, shaping the nation-states). In fact, what is implied here is that Europeans live with multiple identities (e.g., regional, local, national and European), all of which are frequently negotiated, re-negotiated and co-constructed by different social groups in a range of daily practices.

As regards the student mobility scholars, some claim that there is likely to be a link between study abroad and the development of a 'European identity' (e.g. Favell, 2009; Fligstein, 2008). However, this assumption has not been sufficiently researched yet and the existing studies remain at odds.

Some studies, having surveyed the students from British universities (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003), found that Erasmus students were more pro-European and identified with Europe more than the students who did not study abroad. Van Mol (2011; 2014) too has surveyed outgoing European students, as well as "future mobile students", "potential mobile students", and "non-mobile European students" with a focus on their identification with Europe. His study concluded that mobile students were attached to Europe the most, while the non-mobile students expressed their attachment to Europe the least. Both, King & Ruiz-Gelices' and Van Mol's studies suggest that as a result of study abroad experience, Erasmus students were encouraged to become aware of their attachment and identify with Europe.

However, Sigalas (2010) and Wilson (2011) hold a contrary view. Sigalas (2010) studied British mobile students in Europe, as well as the Europeans studying in Britain, and a number of British students who did not study abroad, in order to investigate whether studying abroad had an impact on students' identification with Europe. He concluded that study abroad

had virtually no impact on the European identity of young people in his study. Wilson (2011) in a study of British Erasmus students in France as well as French Erasmus students in the UK and an equal number of non-mobile students in the UK was unable to confirm the link between European student mobility and "European identity" either.

Kuhn (2012) presents an alternative view, claiming that the Erasmus programme is "preaching to the converted" (Kuhn, 2012:995). Having analysed Eurobarometer surveys, Kuhn (2012) asserts that those who embark on Erasmus exchange are already more likely to "feel European" as well as to be open to interaction across borders. Kuhn (2012) considers the young age and the high level of education of Erasmus students to be the most likely factors influencing their identification with Europe. Therefore, due to "a ceiling effect", exchange with fellow Europeans is unlikely to make any difference with regard to mobile students' European identities (ibid.).

However, due to the limitations of the earlier studies, there seems to be insufficient evidence to dismiss the correlation between Erasmus and European identity completely. For instance, both Wilson (2011) and Kuhn (2012) were criticised for the unreliability of their findings (Mitchell, 2015) because of their methodological choices (i.e., using 'Moreno questions'). Also, Sigalas' (2010) choice of the respondents (non-mobile British students, from one university in the UK) have been criticised for lacking reliability (Bergmann, 2015). Besides, earlier studies investigating the correlation between Erasmus mobility and European identity have been criticised for their limited national scope, based predominantly on surveys of British students or students studying in the UK (Mitchell, 2015). This is precarious, due to the nature of the European exchange programme and a long and deep-rooted tradition of Euroscepticism in the UK.

Summary

This chapter provided the context for the present study, having traced the European student mobility from its Medieval origins to the global phenomenon it has become today. The chapter has also sketched the current state of the ERASMUS programme, its aims and impact on European youths by drawing on institutional, media and scholarly sources. While it appears that institutional data is abundant in statistics relating to concrete aspects of student mobility, it is the media that has given insight into the life of Erasmus students and popularised the experience of "Erasmus generation", making it a recognisable phenomenon.

Erasmus students stand apart from other types of migrants that exist today, as they "travel lightly", free from commitment of adult expats or burdens and struggles of long-term/permanent migrants or refugees. Erasmus is the generation of young people brought up in the times of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2007), where nothing is permanent, but fleeting, changing and transforming continuously. Compared to previous generations of youths, this is the generation of young people with a different understanding of distance and proximity, different understanding of time, space and social relationships, shaped by modern technology and perpetual virtual and physical mobility.

Erasmus students appear to have become a recognisable group of youths present in many European universities. They move within the framework of the EU-funded exchange programme and represent the EU vision of united Europe, closely linked with the illusive, yet much hoped-for outcome of "European identity". Having been brought together outside the comfort of their home countries to study abroad, these young people learn to communicate and work efficiently with the fellow Europeans. Due to the characteristic setting of the Erasmus exchange, where mobile students are mostly isolated from the local community, speaking *lingua franca* English, being continuously together (i.e., in classes specially organised for Erasmus students; in shared student accommodation; social activities organised for Erasmus

students), they develop a sense of belonging to Erasmus student community and lead "a double life" (Tsoukalas, 2008), significantly different from that at home. Their experience has been described as exhilarating, yet emotionally demanding due to its brevity and intensity of the life European students tend to lead while abroad.

Even though the numbers of Erasmus students are increasing, and more funding has been allocated to allow more Europeans to experience student mobility, study abroad remains relatively unexplored, especially in applied linguistics, with the exception of language acquisition research. The majority of existing studies in the field of European student mobility are quantitative in nature, revealing general trends and measurable outcomes of study abroad, rarely looking into what exactly motivated this or that outcome, reaction or representation in response to what experiences or encounters. It seems that European student mobility research lacks extensive qualitative studies to allow for better understanding of individual experiences and emerging identities in the context of study abroad. It is this lack of qualitative research that this thesis is attempting to address.

The following chapter provides a review of the most prominent theories of "identity" and its construction in discourse, in order to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of the data gathered in this study.

Chapter 3: Identity: Towards A Discourse Analytical Framework

In the present climate of increased mobility and intercultural contact, the issue of 'identity' (cultural, ethnic, national/supranational, religious, etc.) becomes more acute and more complex than ever before. For quite some time now, identity has been the topic of discussion in multiple disciplines e.g. anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and psychology. Bucholtz & Hall (2010: 27) assert its salience by claiming that "the age of identity is upon us", while Bauman (2004:17) points to identity's discursive and psychological dominance as "the loudest talk in town", as "the burning issue on everybody's mind and tongue". Despite the growing interest in "identity" in the social sciences and humanities, definitions of identity are prolific and multiple (DeFina, 2010; Wodak et al., 2011), many are contradictory while others simply diverse in their definition. Many emerge from different disciplines that appropriate the term to suit their needs, such as sociolinguistics (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller's, 1985 'Acts of Identity'), social psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 'Social Identity Theory') and socio-cognitive theory (Van Dijk, 1998). To date, there seems to be a continuous tension between the way identity is theorised and defined by scholars from different disciplines and even within the same discipline.

There are numerous terms used to refer to "identity", such as: "'self', 'selfhood', 'position', 'role', 'personality', 'category', 'person formulation', 'person description', 'subjectivity', 'subject', 'agent', 'subject position' and 'persona' " (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006: 5-6). These terms are used interchangeably, while some of them are associated with particular theories or traditions (e.g., "subjectivity" in psychoanalytic accounts) (ibid.). Definitions cover the range from identity as a property of the individual (i.e., the product of the mind) to something that appears only as the result of social interaction (DeFina, 2010: 264).

This chapter sets out to trace the origins of today's theories of identity (which impact on this thesis), by offering an overview of the prominent scholars and their conceptualisations of identity. This, allows us to see the development of philosophical and theoretical thought from the Age of Enlightenment onwards, as well as to identify the links with the past that shape modern conceptualisation of the term. The primary focus of the chapter is on post-structuralist conceptualisations of *identity* and its construction in discourse.

3.1 History of Identity

The concept of identity, as conspicuous as it appears to be today, has noticeably changed throughout history. It has been formulated and reformulated numerous times, reflecting the peculiarities of different historical periods and the respective schools of thought. Authors who have reflected on the way formulations of identity have changed throughout history (e.g., Taylor,1989, Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), point to the Western European Age of Enlightenment to find the source of the present-day fascination with identity (cf. Block, 2007). Some of the first accounts of identity by philosophers appeared as early as the sixteenth century and involved reflections on the 'inner self' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2007:18). These earlier studies tended to portray 'identity' as an agentive, reflexive construct of the self and inevitably as a product of the mind.

The Age of Enlightenment (or the Age of Reason) in late 17th and 18th centuries, defined the self in isolation from context or others and focused exclusively on what the self was. It was Descartes who first formulated the idea of a "solitary self" by separating the "mind" from the "body" as well as from the physical world in general (often referred to as "Cartesian dualism" (Hart, 1996:265). Descartes' separation of the mind from the body lead at that time to the popularization of the idea that individuals possess subjectivity, which is free from any external

influences. This idea was further developed through Descartes' infamous notion related to self: *cogito,* short for Latin *cogito ergo sum*, which translates into English as "I think, therefore, I am". In other words, it implies "self-mastery through reason", where the very fact that one thinks proves one's existence or the presence of a self, which Descartes emphasises as the most important above anything else (ibid.).

Another prominent philosopher of the Enlightenment, Locke, argued that knowledge does not originate from prior reasoning, nor is it innate (the mind of a newborn resembles a "blank slate" or "*tabula rasa*") (Locke, 1997:44) but is formed by observation and experience. Thus, "the self" arises from accumulating experience and knowledge in the initially "blank" mind. For Locke, "self" is "a self-aware and self-reflective consciousness" that is fixed in a body (Baird, 2008: 148). Unlike Descartes, Locke did not disregard "substance", arguing that "the body too goes to the making the man"(ibid.). Although Descartes' and Locke's theories seem at odds, both had an effect on the development of the later conceptualizations of identity as "a project of the self" (cf. Taylor, 1989:159).

In response to many propositions of the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century. For the Romanticists, "self" was conceived not from cognition alone but was seen as something "innate", emergent from feelings and emotional response to the outside world, (Benwell & Stokoe, 2007:19). Many Romantic poets (e.g., Keats, Wordsworth, Yeats, Stevens) even portrayed self-expression as a genuine part of "Nature". Hence, the Romantic conception of "the inner impulse" or the idea of the importance of one's self-fulfillment was at the same time instilled with moral principles to fulfill one's destiny. This view of identity can be traced all the way to *Late Modernity* (or the characterization of the present day society), particularly, the notions of "true" or "authentic self" can be found in a number of contemporary self-help publications (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:19-20).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, it was Freud's highly influential psychoanalytic view of identity that prevailed. Freud's primary focus was the "internal workings of one's subjectivity", by taking into consideration the impact of socialisation within the family and their effects on one's psyche. Freud's recognition of social elements lead to the innovative view of the individual as "a psycho-social subject". (cf. Hollway & Jefferson, 2005).

Lacan, unlike Freud focused on the way individuals came to identify themselves as a part of the wider social structure. Lacan emphasised the importance of language in the process of identification (i.e., the *Symbolic Order*) and claimed that "symbols envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world" (Lacan, 1956: 42). Thus, the Symbolic Order functions as the way in which the subject becomes a "self", the act closely linked with language and the innate conscious/unconscious associations that words carry for each individual.

However, Lacan resembled Freud in arguing for the duality of the process of identification, or "the mirror phase". Namely, the mirror phase in Lacanian terms relates to the early infants' growing awareness of themselves, of "selfhood", when an infant first sees their reflection in the mirror and becomes conscious of themselves as distinct from others. This process is essentially illusive, as an individual could simultaneously conceive themselves as "whole" and "coherent", while at the same time "othered" and "strange".

Modern times (late twentieth and early twenty-first century) have been referred to as "high", "late", "post" (cf. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:22) or "liquid" (Bauman, 2013) modernity, where processes of globalisation have brought about major changes (political, economic, technological, socio-cultural, etc.), invariably affecting the individuals and society. Prominent postmodern thinkers, Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2005;2010;2013), have observed that contemporary men and women have become increasingly aware of the lack of continuity and stability both in their personal lives as well as in their environment.

Bauman (2013) argues that the times we live in cannot be described as "modern" or "post-modern era" but are best described as "liquid modernity". This notion comprises the reality in which everything is transitory rather than permanent and immediate rather than long-term. Besides, fluids travel easily but may not be easily stopped, they pass around some obstacles, while dissolving and/or soaking other. Whenever meeting the "solids", "fluids" come out unchanged, while solids are changed in one way or another (e.g., becoming moist or drenched). It is this extraordinary mobility of fluids that Bauman sees as pertaining to their "lightness" and "weightlessness", associated with their mobility and inconstancy, making "liquidity" a fitting metaphor for the present times.

"Liquid modernity", according to Bauman (2013) follows on from "solid modernity", with "solidity", as its distinctive feature that relates to permanence, stability and invariability. For Bauman (2000), solid modernity represents "an era of mutual engagement" with permanence, whereas its liquid phase represents "the epoch of disengagement" (Bauman, 2000: 120). This contrast is presented as a way of illustrating significant social, political and economic changes that have taken place. Nonetheless, Bauman acknowledges that "saolidity" remains important and individuals need it to organize the constantly changing world around them by introducing some elements of permanence and stability. Contemporary individuals are inclined towards thinking in "solid" and finite terms, and therefore, they struggle to move towards a more "liquid" understanding of self, others and the world around them (Bauman, 2006). It appears that contemporary individuals are torn between permanence (solidity) and change(liquidity), struggling to construct their identities along this complex continuum.

In fact, an impressive number of postmodern theorists see the identity of late modern individuals as being in a state of "crisis" (Erikson, 1968), where in response to personal insecurity and fragmentation, individuals engage in a search for stability. By rejecting the ambiguity and complexity of the contemporary world, postmodern individuals resort to

"ontological security" (cf. Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) explains that "ontological security" is reliant on people's ability to give meaning to their lives by repressing disconcerting or traumatic experiences (e.g., death, sickness, economic downturn, etc.), creating a sense of apparent order and continuity in regard to their life story. As a result, late modern conceptualisations of identity struggle to reconcile concepts such as "fluidity" (Bauman (2004), "migration" (Block, 2006) and "crossing" (Rampton, 2006), suggesting ongoing change and movement in processes related to identity, with the attempt to capture "the authentic sense of self" that is finite and homogeneous (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:220).

Today's conceptualisation of the *postmodern self* still bears the elements of the earlier work on identity, which is particularly noticeable in the stances taken by the scholars favouring *essentialist* or *anti-essentialist* perspectives. The essentialists support the idea that identity connotes "one true self" (Barker & Galasinski, 2001:30), thereby favouring the view of identity as a product of psychological, social and cognitive processes, located 'inside' persons and in communion with others (e.g. resorting to the notions of fixed social categories of ethnic groups; religious groupings; sex, etc.). To illustrate this, let us quote Erikson (1980), who maintains that "identity connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (109). This definition relies heavily on the language of permanence and possessions, where identity is regarded as the property of an individual or a group sharing similar characteristics. According to the *essentialist* perspective, despite being separate from social structures an individual is inevitably influenced by them, thus s/he adopts a range of social and cultural practices, becoming representative of a group of individuals with similar backgrounds. Thus, identity is viewed as a feature of a person or group that is finite and recognizable. Bucholtz (2003: 400) sums this up by asserting that essentialism rests on two key assumptions: "(1) that groups can be clearly delimited; and (2) that group

members are more or less alike". However, this perspective raises a number of concerns voiced by some scholars.

Recently, a number of social theorists have questioned this essentialist stance where individuals' are believed to be determined either by biological or environmental factors. However, a purely essentialist understanding of identity that implies stasis and fixed categorisation between individuals from a given group is not viable, as people may change constantly in the course of their lives (and on daily, even momentary basis), as they cross into and out of/invoke various national, racial, linguistic and other social categories (e.g. age, gender etc.) . Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2005) assert that modern life is best characterised by "movement" and "flow" and not by fixed and rigid properties that define the "whatness" of a given entity (Fuss, 2013:5). Therefore, a purely essentialist understanding of identity does not cater for the continuous change that contemporary men and women experience on daily basis.

For that reason, supporters of the *anti-essentialist* position, hold a distinctly different stance, favouring an assumption that identity is "an ongoing process of becoming", which draws on the elements of difference and similarity (Barker & Galasinski, 2006:30). Consequently, as Derrida maintains, it is futile to look for the "essence of identity", as identity resembles an on-going description of who one is by drawing either on *supplementarity* or *difference* (Derrida, 1976). Since the meaning is never finite or complete, identity is merely a "snap-shot" of numerous unfolding meanings, or alternatively a "strategic positioning", which allows for meanings to emerge (Hall, 1992). Assuming the anti-essentialist stance, Kroskrity (1993) even argues that "identity" as a single term is incomplete and should be replaced by its plural equivalent, "identities" (deriving from "the repertoire of identities" Kroskrity, 1993: 40), suggesting that individuals have a range of identity choices (cf. multiple, shifting, fragmented identities in Hall, 1992) available to them within different contexts and with different interlocutors.

Developments in the conceptualisation of "identity" have shifted the focus from stability, structure and function with regard to identity, towards a more "liquid" and open-ended approach (e.g., Bauman, 2005) offered by *social constructionist* and *post-structuralist* positions. Scholars following the *social constructionist* perspective (Hall, 1996; Kroskrity, 2000) assert that identity is processual and deeply social (Foucault, 1984), determined by specific interactional contexts as the result of negotiation that involves "discursive work" (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1970) and "discourse practices" (Fairclough, 1989).Social constructionists maintain that social and discourse practices in many respects define the way individuals and/or groups construct themselves in relation to others, as identities are "performed, carried out and embodied through a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic means" (De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006:3). According to this approach, identities are regarded as "processes", rather than "end products", being shaped in the course of a particular interaction (DeFina et al., 2006).

As the popularity of social constructionism (a non-essentialist stance) steadily increased, the essentialist stance has been heavily criticised for its limitations and unsuitability (Phillips, 2007; 2010). Nonetheless, "essentialist discourse" is still very much present in everyday life as well as in the scholarly literature. Also, even though a great number of recent studies have adopted an anti-essentialist stance, there has not been a clear paradigm shift in Applied Linguistics towards an anti-essentialist perspective. On the contrary, both (anti-/essentialist) perspectives are very much present (although not unproblematically) in the scholarly literature (cf. McEntee-Atalianis, 2013: 173).

Moreover, it seems that an essentialist perspective may even have regained its popularity and has been referred to as a widespread human characteristic or "the disease of thinking in essences" (Barthes, 1957: 75). Notably, the importance of essentialism may sometimes be overlooked, for some argue that providing static and finite categories for comparison, allows

us to grasp the more abstract and changeable ones (Fuss, 2013). Fuss even goes as far as to suggest that a purely anti-essentialist approach such as that of social constructionism could be understood as a more complex form of essentialism. It appears that humans cannot avoid essentialist categories altogether, and they remain a "psychologically inevitable feature of human cognition" (Phillips, 2010: 52).

Boundaries between essentialism and anti-essentialism are not as rigid as they may appear to be at first. Instead, the two traditions could be understood as both complementary and mutually enriching. In fact, the scholars who draw on social constructionism or post-structuralism have been shown to adopt the category labels that are "fixed" or stable (e.g. *solid identities* in Dervin, 2006; *core identities* in Gee, 1999) only in order to assert their mutability. For instance, Gee (1999) borrows from both essentialist and anti-essentialist perspectives in his understanding of "identity" in differentiating between "socially situated" ("multiple identities we take on in different practices and contexts") and "core identities" ("whatever continuous and relatively "fixed" sense of self that underlies our continually shifting multiple identities") (Gee: 1999:39).

3.2 Approaching Identity from a Post-Structuralist Perspective

Post-structuralism remains an ambiguous and ill-defined term (Block, 2007) that is broadly applied to a range of theoretical stances, drawing on the work of French scholars (Althusser, 1971; Derrida, 1976; Foucault, 1986). French post-structuralists greatly contributed towards the contemporary understanding of identity by elaborating their reflections on "the subject in language" (De Fina, 2003:15) and the irreducible link between the two (i.e., "identity" and "language"). For instance, Derrida (2000:91), pointing in this direction, maintains that the subject is "inscribed in language, is a function of language". Another perspective that post-structuralists emphasised is the role of *social practices* and *cultural templates*, such as Althusser's (1971) notion of the *social subject* produced in discourse. By

drawing on the conceptualisation of the way people tend to come to accept and "internalise" the existing social structure and norms, Althusser (op. cit.) coins the term "interpellation". Foucault's (1984) theory takes a similar path by asserting that social practices produce specific social subjects.

Unlike earlier essentialist approaches, French post-structuralists drew attention to the role of language and interaction as well as the socio-cultural practices in theorising identity. Weedon, the foundational theorist in post-structuralist discussions on identity, drew on Lacan, Weedon preferring to use "subjectivities" instead of "identity" (Weedon, 1997:32). For Weedon "subjectivity" refers to that aspect of individual psyche by means of which a person can identify him/herself and their place in the world by "inserting" themselves into specific "subject positions" within a chosen "discourse". Consequently, "subjectivity" changes constantly, whenever new discourses or different subject positions become available.

In rendering meaning to a range of potential interpretations of the world, social institutions and processes, Weedon (1997) draws on Foucault's work in her application of the term "discursive fields" (34). Although, Weedon acknowledges that it is possible for an individual to be satisfied with the available subject positions throughout their lifetime, as soon as the full identification with available discourses ceases, a conflict emerges:

> Where there is space between the position of the subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced. […] The discursive constitutions of subjects, both compliant and resistant, is part of wider social play for power.
>
> (Weedon, 1997:109)

It is argued here that any subject positions (be it the desired ones or not) are not innocent choices, but a response (possibly even a manipulation) to the contextual (micro and macro) circumstances, affected by the societal norms and standards.

Weedon's understanding of subjectivity as continuously being reconstituted in discourse is echoed in Butler's (1999) *performative theory of gender.* In Butler's theorisation of gender identity, she claims that individuals become "gendered" by means of acquiring

socially acceptable norms of behaviour, dress code and physical appearance, as well as language, as they enact or "do being men and women" (Butler, 1999:179). Identities, according to Butler, just as *subject positions* are not only physical (bodily) but also linguistic enactments of discourses at given times and in particular spaces.

Butler's notion of "performativity" can perhaps be traced back to Goffman's "footing" (1959). In Goffman's work there are also a number of references to contextually-determined "situated identities" (in Block, 2007:17). Namely, "situated identity" has to do with the way discourse participants position themselves towards one another and with regard to broader cultural and institutional arrangements. These processes of positioning are not predetermined but emerge in discourse by "doing being" a certain kind of person (Goffman, 1981). Also, Goffman distinguishes between "the performance" as the impression that individuals intend to "give off" and the way that "performance" is received and interpreted by the audience, which may be quite different from the actual observed performance (Goffman, 1981:128).

By reference to the presentation of self in face-to-face interaction, Goffman (1981:129) also introduced the notion of "footing", to refer to the *alignment* and *change of alignment* involved in the production and reception of an utterance that the speaker takes towards him/herself and to others. Change of footing may be motivated by the change of the vantage point in one's narrative from past to present as well as when quoting others or alluding to institutional discourses. Goffman (1981:144) claims that the speaker may have one or more of the following roles with respect to the utterance: the *animator* (refers to animating one's own words but also speaking another person(s) words), the *author* (refers to speaking one's own words, or the words of the author, who has developed the text, be it written or spoken) or the *principal* (refers to adopting an institutional position *vis-à-vis* the utterance).

Although, Goffman's work has been influential among social scientists, especially linguists, over the last 30 years, some researchers have been sceptical towards its application

to the study of discourse and identity. For instance, Davies & Harré (1999:45) are rather disapproving towards Goffman's stance, arguing that his approach disregards the fact that alignments may precede and therefore shape the very act of speaking. Davies & Harré (1999) claim that *positioning theory* is more apt for capturing the ongoing and emergent nature of multiple subject positions that appear in the course of interaction. Davies & Harré (1999) draw on both the linguistic signs (especially the physical metaphors of position and location) as well as other semiotic activities (e.g., dress, body language) as the basis for their theory. The scholars assume that not only do the individuals *engage in positioning* (by situating themselves through their discursive practices), but they *are* also *positioned* (situated) by others, which inevitably transpires in the narrative.

It has been argued that positioning may take place in different space (geographical/ metaphorical), time frames (i.e., with reference to the present, past or future) as well as in relation to different communities (who are either in immediate proximity or geographically remote). The notion of *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) gives insight into understanding the process of identity construction in terms of positioning self in relation to different groups. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet define "communities of practice" as consisting of a group of people brought together by an engagement in a certain activity, thereby generating "common practices" (i.e., ways of thinking, speaking, beliefs, values, etc.) (1992:464). *Communities of practice* allow individuals to adopt a range of "subject positions" (see the discussion on identity as the social positioning of self and other in Bucholtz & Hall, 2010:18) either on a short-term (i.e., daily basis) or a long-term (i.e., life-long) basis, depending on the communities they are exposed to. This connection between social participation and communities of practice is considered to be indispensable for an individual, as the active partaking in the practices of the social communities allows one to construct

identities in relation to them via the following "modes of belonging" or "modes of identification":

- *Engagement* having the most immediate relation to 'practice' (engaging in activities or doing things), such as talking, developing things, either alone or together, allowing one to develop an *identity of participation* or *non-participation* in the communities that people belong to;

- *Imagination* by engaging with the world, people also construct its representation, which allows them to make sense of their belonging. Images or representations allow one to position oneself, to see oneself from a different angle, as well as reflect on the situation via language, pictures, stories, etc. These images give away the interpretation of one's participation in the social world;

- *Alignment* is a 'mode of belonging' that links 'time' and 'space' without being restricted by mutual engagement; through alignment, an individual becomes a part of a larger community by 'playing their part' or at least the way s/he understands that part, which may or may not be consistent with the understanding of others;

(Wenger, 1998:197)

Wenger (1998) presents these "modes of belonging" (*engagement*, *imagination* and *alignment*) as a way of understanding identity formation. These three modes are not mutually exclusive, and are best conceptualised as interconnected. That is, alignment 'focuses' imagination, whilst engagement 'grounds' it, allowing it to be negotiated in practice. Although it appears at first that *communities of practice* are a matter of individual's choice, in fact their entrance is not free to anyone at any given time.

To an extent, "communities of practice" have a lot in common with Mathews' (2000) metaphoric "cultural supermarket", which offers individuals an exposure to a variety of internationally available media and technologies, making a whole range of identities available to be assumed by individuals. Nevertheless, despite a seemingly endless free choice (i.e., *agency*), identities are not completely free for everyone to choose from. Since not everyone has unrestricted access to all that is available (nor can they enact all identities), identity choices remain delimited by historical, socio-cultural, political norms and contexts (i.e., *structure*).

In relation to this observation, some identity and language researchers (Norton, 2001; Kinginger, 2004; 2013) drawing on Wenger's (1998) argument that imagination plays a crucial part in identity work, have pointed to the existence of "*imagined subject positions*" in "*imagined communities*" (the term coined and used by Anderson, 1991). Individuals tend to create "imagined communities" and assume "imagined subject positions" in these communities by transcending the time and space, and by creating new images of themselves and the world based on their individual understandings and interpretations (cf. Wenger, 1998:176). This also implies that not only a small group of friends or colleagues but also a whole nation could be a "mental construct", an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983) or in Hall's terms "a system of cultural representations" (1996:612). This is fairly common, since most communities have been observed to be "imaginary constructs", as the members of even the smallest nations will not be able to meet every single representative of that national group.

Nevertheless, in their imagination, an idea of a more or less homogeneous collectivity exists and at times can be "ventriloquated" (to borrow a Bakhtinian term, see Bakhtin, 1981:294) by any given individual. That is, by making discursive choices, individuals "ventriloquate" (use the voices of others in their speech or writing) not only the voices they have come across in the past (i.e., "actual *intertextuality*") but also the more abstract voice types (i.e., *interdiscursivity*). This is taken to refer both, to the content of the utterances (or what is talked about) as well as the lexico-grammatical choices that the speaker or writer makes as each utterance becomes "populated with the intentions of others" or "interanimated" (ibid.) by others' voices (i.e., see the discussion on the notions of *voice* and *dialogism* in Bakhtin, 1986), thereby proliferating "the imagined communities" as well as making claims about "self" in relation to these communities.

Earlier studies observed that particularly under the circumstances of change, uncertainty and strangeness, when an individual may endure psychological state of "fragmented

consciousness, a sense of unreality, and feelings of being disconnected from oneself or one's environment" (Steinberg & Schnall 2003: 9 in Dervin, 2007), elements of intertextuality/ interdiscursivity may enter their narratives (especially when talking about themselves and their experiences) as a common adaptive defence technique. This has been described as "the act of dissociation" (psychological and linguistic), including: (a) *depersonalization* (when one talks about oneself as if 'self' were another person, as if one watches oneself from the distance); (b) *internal dialogue* (or *externalized internal/virtual dialogue*) mostly occurs when a person has to make a decision or role-play a conversation that has taken/ will take place. This notion is very similar to the pragmatic notion of "represented speech" or "constructed dialogue" (see Bakhtin, 1981), or the notion of "polyphony" (presence of multiple voices in one's discourse). Dervin (2007) too identifies a number of instances, containing what he calls "virtual voices", when one introduces a speech that is attributed to oneself, (c) *derealisation*, which is normally the result of stress, fatigue, extreme surprise or amazement, e.g., one cannot believe, realize or understand what is happening to oneself; (d) *identity alteration* is connected with change of discourse and identifiers; talking about oneself by using "we", "you" or "one"; acting like a different person, as in imitating speaking in different accents, pretending to be experiencing certain emotions (e.g., happiness, satisfaction, anger, etc.).

This implies that identities are reflexive and interpretative as well as contextually-determined, political, historical and cultural (Wodak et al., 1999). To illustrate this, Wodak et al., (2009:14) argue that individuals regularly resort to narratives as they "arrange and interpret, rearrange and reinterpret past events in their own life". The *narrative identity* that one assumes as s/he narrates captures its fluid nature that is prone to change in time and space, against the backdrop of a seemingly coherent storyline. Wodak et al. (ibid.) explain the significance of narrative identity by drawing on Ricoeur's (1992) and Martin's (1995) theoretical concepts:

> Narrative identity allows various, different, partly contradictory circumstances and experiences to be integrated into a coherent temporal structure, thus making it possible to sketch a person's identity against the background of a dynamic constancy model which does justice to the coherence of a human life. Thus

> the concept of narrative identity can go beyond the one-sided model of an invariant, self-identical thing. It can take into account the idea that the self can never be grasped without the Other, without change.
> (Wodak et al., 2009: 14)

This quotation sets the stage for the use of macro-strategies in "dynamic discursive constructions of identity" (33), which always requires a mirror image, a contrast, or "an Other", as it allows one to juxtapose *self* against *the other*, determining what one is by noting what one is not:

> Identity implies both a uniqueness and sameness … one's identity cannot be defined in isolation: the only way to circumscribe an identity is by contrasting it with other identities. Consequently, identity is an ambiguous notion. It gets its meaning from what it is not, from the Other: like a word in a crossword puzzle, it is located in a place where uniqueness, defined in a negative way (one's identity implies that one is different from the Others), meets a sameness which needs an 'elseness' to exist (to get an identity one must be perceived as identical to or to identify with someone else).
> (Martin, 1995: 5)

An individual's self cannot exist in isolation, requiring another to validate its existence. This view is suggestive of an ongoing process of comparison between 'self' and 'other' that takes place and indicates the contextually-determined, social nature of identity, attempting to negotiate between one's own and others' similarities and differences.

This view of identity as a "social location", informed a number of theories in sociology and sociolinguistics, where 'self' is primarily understood by its membership or identification with particular group(-s) (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:24). One of the key theories of group identity is Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1982), which was later expanded in Social Categorisation Theory (see Turner et al., 1987). Social identity theorists assume that "identity" emerges through individual's identification with a group, which involves a reflexive knowledge of a group membership as well as an emotional attachment, affecting the individual's desire for affiliation with a group, or indeed, the wish to distance oneself from that group.

On the basis of this assumption, SIT differentiates between "in-group" and "out-group", which are flexible rather than deterministic categories, prone to change, often determined by the activities one is involved in. "In-group" membership relates to the community an individual affiliates him/herself with, while the "out-group" implies assumed distance and difference by

being on the "outside". Benwell & Stokoe (2006) point out that in-group identifications often become strengthened by means of reductive categorisations of the out-group through stereotypes and prejudice, as the individuals tend to present the positive in-group characteristics in contrast with the negative out-group features. Although SIT and its conceptualisation of identity gained popularity among variationist sociolinguists, it has also been criticised for its "treatment of identity as a cognitive, pre-discursive and essentialist phenomenon", often imposed by the analysts, rather than being provisional and emergent in discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:26).

Nevertheless, as people need to categorise their experiences, ideas and others whom they meet, in order to "survive" (Howarth, 2002:20), the notion of "representation" is useful here, as identities are constructed through and against representations. This stance draws on the anti-essentialist view of identity and assumes that all meaning is situated "in a series of representations" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2006:31) that are constructed, negotiated and changed through discursive interaction within and between social groups.

For quite some time now representations have been predominantly studied by the scholars of social psychology, but the notion has also made its way into other fields, such as intercultural communication (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). The study of *social representations* or *socio-cognitive representations* (as they can be called more accurately) is associated with the name of a French social psychologist, Moscovici (2000) and has been defined as "organized, coherent, socially shared set[s] of knowledge about an object or domain of objects[31]' which combine with 'affective structures with inherent normative and evaluative dimensions" (Augoustinos et al., 2006: 42, 94). Socio-cognitive representations comprise of beliefs and/or knowledge, including the knowledge acquired through media, as well as the attitudes and

[31] "objects" (here) can also mean abstract notions such as "group identities";

expectations deriving from norms and values held by members of a given discourse community (Koller, 2012:21).

Thus, socio-cognitive representations are not mental models held by individuals but rather "cognitive structures" shared by members of a particular group (ibid.). These structures are "socially and discursively constructed in the course of […] communication, establish social identities and relations by being communicated, and appear to be subject to continual transformation [...] through the flow of intergroup relations" (Augoustinos et al., 2006: 258). What follows from this is that representations are at least to an extent constituted intertextually, as the result of various texts (written) and discourses (oral) being circulated within the communities. Thus the key function of social representations is "making something unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself become familiar" (Moscovici, 1984:24), via communication (discourse), whereby constructing a shared social reality among the members of a social group. However, these representations are not stable or consistent throughout time or across different contexts and may be reshaped by the individual members of a community.

Studying representations is not unproblematic, and the scholars need to shift their focus from inquiring into "what someone's identity is" to asking more open-ended questions, "how one's identity is constructed/ represented?" (Dervin, 2007). Therefore, when working with identity, one needs to focus closely on discourse, looking past its "surface" (Dervin, 2011), while concentrating on what is concealed in discourse and analyse the specific linguistic choices of the speaker used to construct different representations.

3.3. Studying Identity through Language

Language is an essential tool for human communication and "making sense of reality" (Burr, 2015). In the social sciences the relation between language and identity used to be predominantly regarded in essentialist terms, considering that language is a "natural"

expression shared equally by all group members (Joseph, 2004). Later on, following in the footsteps of Saussure (de Saussure *et al.,* 1986: 9-10), linguists engaged in the study of "the system of language" (*langue*) rather than "the social use of language" (*parole*), thereby shifting their attention away from the utterances of the everyday speech practices, and focusing on the underlying language system that allows those utterances to take shape.

Ferdinand de Saussure's theories have been influential for sociolinguists, especially those interested in the interplay between language and identity. For instance, within the *variationist sociolinguistics,* identity is understood as a "pre-discursive construct", which has a causal link with particular linguistic behaviours (Labov, 1966). This approach is able to provide a detailed description of variables, including geographical and class variables as well as age, gender and occupation, to explain social or linguistic behaviour. However, the approach adopted by variationist sociolinguists has been criticised for treating identities in essentialist terms, as crude categories of investigation, often biologically determined and imposed by the subjective assumptions of the analyst (e.g., social class) (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:26; De Fina, 2003:5).

In contrast to *variationists*, another theoretical framework, *interactional sociolinguistics,* studies the relation between "social structure" and "linguistic structure" (cf. Gumperz 1971, 1982). Interactional sociolinguistics holds that meanings are created in the course of communication and that they are dependent on socio-cultural contexts (i.e., with the intervening variables of gender, ethnicity, class etc., influencing meaning) for their interpretation (Gumperz, 1982:1). Thus, whilst early *variationists* tended to see identities as stable entities, *interactional sociolinguists* have pointed to a more fluid and dynamic understanding of identity. In line with social constructivist views, it is now generally regarded in sociolinguistics that the relation between language and identity is mutually constitutive,

where language contributes to constructing an individual's social identity, and at the same time, an individual's social identity influences the linguistic choices they make (Meyerhoff, 2006).

To date, scholars remain divided with regard to their understanding of the interplay between language and identity. At one end of the continuum lies a *micro-level* approach with a radically empirical Conversation Analysis and at the other end, Critical Discourse Analysis, an approach predominantly drawing on *macro levels* of analysis (De Fina, 2003; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This analytical and theoretical split is not exclusive to the study of identity but also includes different conception of the relationship between language and social life, the role of the scholar as well as the methodological choices made throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

Scholars working in the field of Conversation Analysis are encouraged to avoid pre-selecting any identities, which one might wish to use in a political or cultural frame of analysis (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998:5) and instead look solely for the categories of identity membership that emerge in the local context and that are explicitly indicated by the speaker(-s). According to the view of CA scholars, identities are constructed in talk-in-interaction, as they are of importance to the on-going interaction; therefore the interlocutors "orient" their talk towards them (DeFina et al., 2006). Thus, Conversation Analysts study the actual interactional data at hand exhaustively and try to refrain from theorising any 'macro' or external (social, political, historical or cultural) implications. For CA, the local (micro) context of interaction is the only important context to understand identities in discourse.

This limited focus on the immediate context of interaction is the key limitation of CA approach. Therefore, the main criticism of CA comes from the scholars working in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is "committed to the principle that the meaning of a text cannot be exclusively derived from the text itself" (Fairclough, 1992). According to CDA, the study of identity needs to take into account the "interdiscursive" and "intertextual" layers

of socio-historical practices, within which the on-going discourses are embedded (Wodak, 2006).

Besides, CDA views language as "never a neutral or transparent medium that unproblematically reflects an objective reality". Rather, it is understood as an "ideological practice that mediates, influences and even constructs our experiences, identities and ways of viewing the world" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:44). CDA treats discourse as a system of options, which allows the speakers to make conscious choices. That is why, within CDA, identity is not only constructed in the grammar of language (at the level of representation) in terms of "the relationship between text and the reader or speaker" but also in terms of "the expressive dimension", as "an element of style", or, "the way of being" and, thus, incorporating both "social" and "personal" identities revealing the subject's attitudes and ideologies (see Fairclough, 1989).

Here, our choice of social constructionist and anti-essentialist stance towards the relationship between discourse and identity determines our choice of CDA as the most suitable research programme for the present study. Of particular relevance is the fact that CDA attempts to link both the "micro" and the "macro" contexts via thorough engagement with the textual product of discourse ("text") as well as the analysis of the context of socio-cultural practices ("social practice") (cf. Fairclough, 1995). Thus, it is CDA that offers us the most suitable tools for approaching the study of identity construction in discourses of Erasmus students by integrating into the analysis the wider historical, socio-political and cultural implications of European mobility on the European youths.

The next section provides an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as its theoretical underpinnings permitting the development of the analytical framework for the study of identity and discourse.

3.3.1. The Critical Discourse Analytic Approach to Identity Construction

Critical research on language is not new, as it belongs to the tradition of a language critique which can be traced back to classical antiquity (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Stubbs, 1997) and the Aristotelian study of rhetoric. Beside rhetoric, the roots of CDA lie in Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics (see Blommaert, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Fairclough, 2003). Drawing on the works of social theorists, such as Foucault and Habermas, as well as earlier social philosophers of language, Bakhtin and Gramsci, and at the same time being influenced by the Frankfurt school, CDA makes use of linguistic and socially grounded approaches in their study of discourse (Crawshaw & Tusting, 2000:27). Resting on the notion that complex interrelations between discourse and society require eclecticism in its theoretical framework, CDA combines linguistic and sociological approaches to the study of written and spoken discourse (Wodak & Weiss, 2003:7).

Although CDA is positioned in a linguistic milieu and its "success is measured primarily with the yardstick of linguistics, linguistically oriented pragmatics and discourse analysis" (Blommaert, 2005:7), CDA cannot be viewed as a single method but should be understood as an interdisciplinary approach, consisting of a variety of perspectives and methods (Wodak, 2006). Many critical discourse theorists present the principles of CDA in their own terms (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 1996; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Meyer, 2001). Some of them correspond to the common ground of all CDA approaches, while others are more disparate (Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The most commonly used view is that of Fairclough & Wodak (in van Dijk, 1997) and Wodak (2006), who describe CDA as addressing social issues and focussing not exclusively on language and language use, but also on the linguistic characteristics of social and cultural processes.

Within the scope of the present study Wodak's *Discourse Historical Approach* (henceforth, DHA) is preferred over other approaches to CDA, because it offers the major tools for the systematic analysis of identities and their construction in discourse (see detailed overview of DHA analytical framework in Chapter 4), while incorporating important background data into the linguistic analysis (Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Wodak 2001; Wodak et al. 1999). DHA follows a complex concept of "social critique" that includes three interconnected aspects, two of which are associated with the dimension of *cognition* and one with the dimension of *action* (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Namely, DHA aims to reveal inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in text or discourse structures. The scholar engaged in the analysis of discourse is encouraged to make use of their own background and contextual knowledge in order to embed the communicative or interactional structures of a specific discursive event into a wider frame of social and political relations, processes and circumstances (see Wodak & Meyer, 2001: 67). Then, in order to interpret the discursive event, the scholar needs to resort to relevant social theories gaining distance from the data, embedding the data in the social context, clarifying the political stance of discourse participants, and continuously engaging in self-reflection while undertaking the research. It is hoped that DHA-informed discourse analysis can offer some "prognostic critique", whereby transforming, improving and giving insight into communication (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

Among the focal points in DHA is a framework for the study of identity construction in discourse that has been adopted by a number of scholars to study: national identity, migration and discrimination (De Cillia et al., 1999; Matouschek et al., 1995; Wodak et al, 1999; 2009; Krzyzanowski & Wodak, 2007;) refugee identity construction by media (Unger, Wodak & KhosraviNik, 2016), European identity construction (Wodak, 2009; Krzyzanowski, 2010; Zappettini, 2012). These earlier studies have motivated my choice of DHA as offering the most suitable methodological and analytical tools for the present study, even though the earlier

studies of student mobility, discourse and identity opted for different theoretical and analytical frameworks (e.g., Dervin, 2006; 2009; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Papatsiba, 2003; 2006).

3.4 Research gap and Research questions

Thirty years on, ERASMUS has not only become "the world's most successful student mobility programme" (European Commission, 2014b:3) but also a recognised brand (Feyen & Kzaklewska, 2013). The funding provided by the EU allows young people to invest in their future by gaining an international experience of living, studying and/or working in another country. The experience, knowledge, qualities and skills gained in the course of student mobility has been argued (see above) to have an impact on young Europeans that reaches far beyond their actual stay (Coleman, 2014:36). Many employers as well as the European Union greatly value the benefits gained from ERASMUS, as it can "contribute to enriching students' academic knowledge and professional competences, support their personal development, help to make the mobility of people during all their lifetime and forge a European identity– which is a central part of the European project – a reality" (European Union, 2012: 6). However, current studies have been inconclusive with regard to: whether or not study abroad does actually promote European identity; what impact it has on identities of young Europeans; and how the identities of exchange students are constructed in discourse.

The questions related to identity inevitably emerge in the course of intercultural encounters, as mobile students begin to reflect on their new experiences, their relation/position towards others and the world. The literature review of previous inquiries into the field of student mobility and identity, conducted for the purposes of the present study, allows us to confirm that no previous research in the field of applied linguistics has concentrated on the discursive construction of identity by Erasmus students in Latvia. Neither, to the author's knowledge are there any studies that consider the political discourses and the way Erasmus students and the Erasmus programme are constructed linguistically. Therefore, by conducting this study, we

wish to complement the existing research on student mobility not only by analysing the discourses of Erasmus students but also comparing them to the 'top down' discourses emanating from the European Commission, expressing the vision of what the Erasmus programme and exchange students are expected to be like. It is believed that the present study "can add a little to the overall picture and to our understanding of one of the most complex of all educational phenomena" (Coleman, 2006: 37). Thus, the following ***research questions*** are proposed for the present study:

1) *What are the implications of being an Erasmus student on representations of identity?*
2) *What discursive strategies do Erasmus students use to construct their identities and how do they position themselves with respect to others (i.e., other Erasmus students, their co-nationals, local students, the host community and other communities and/or individuals)?*
3) *What are the top-down representations of Erasmus students as expressed in the speeches of A. Vassiliou and the Latvian institutional online texts?*
4) *How do the top-down constructions compare to bottom-up representations of mobile students and Erasmus programme?*

The following four research questions (informed by Wodak, 2009; Reisigl, 2008; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009:93) informed the analysis of the interviews with Erasmus students, as well as guided the selection and focused the analysis of the extracts from Vassiliou's speeches. The research questions needed minor adaptation, while generally resembling those above, to suit the discourse analysis of Vassiliou's speeches:

1) How are Erasmus students / student mobility programme named and referred to linguistically?
2) What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to Erasmus students, Erasmus programme or student mobility scheme as such?
3) What arguments are employed in the discourse about the benefits of the programme for Erasmus students and/or other Europeans?
4) From what perspective are the nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
5) Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated?

The research questions were regularly consulted in order to focus the analysis of both the interviews and speeches and aid the formulation of the overarching assumptions, in order to be able to draw comparisons based on the findings.

Chapter 4: Data Collection and Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted in the present study. Section 4.1 provides a rationale for the choice of political speeches and semi-structured interviews. In section 4.2 and 4.3 the ways in which data was collected for the present study are described together with some methodological issues including interview design, data coding and practical arrangements. The analytical framework used in this study, which is largely based on the DHA, originally proposed by Wodak (2001) and further elaborated by Reisigl & Wodak (2001), Wodak & Meyer (2009) and Wodak et al., (2009), is discussed in detail in section 4.4. This is followed by some reflections on the limitations of adopting the DHA for further analysis.

4.1. Motivation behind the methods used in the study

Having been an exchange and an international student myself in the course of the undergraduate and post-graduate studies, I became fascinated with the impact that living and studying in another country has on an individual. Following my own study abroad, I worked as a lecturer at the University of Latvia (between 2005 and 2012) where I taught and observed Erasmus students for quite some time. Therefore, even before starting the research, I was familiar with this group both through personal experiences of student mobility as well as being a member of staff at the university, interacting with this group, and being familiar with the institutional requirements and the EU regulations regarding the Erasmus programme.

The data for this study was collected between 2010 and 2012 from three political speeches by the EU Commissioner for Education (A. Vassiliou), the study of the corpus of informative texts related to Erasmus project published on the homepage of the State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia and 15 individual interviews with incoming Erasmus exchange students in Latvia. It was motivated (as specified above) by the existing

research gap in Applied Linguistics on (European) identity construction in discourses of mobile European students and the noticeable impact (beside language learning (Coleman, 2006)) that student mobility appears to have on them (cf., Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Coleman, 2006; 2013; Dervin, 2006; 2007; 2011; Papatsiba, 2006). Besides, while the Erasmus programme is embedded within a broader European institutional and political context, top-down discourses representing Erasmus programme and/or Erasmus students have not been dealt with so far either by student mobility scholars, nor Applied Linguists.

The decision to work with three sets of data (political speeches, online institutional texts and interviews) was determined by a number of factors. First, in order to explore 'top down' perspectives of those who formulate and promote ERASMUS (represented via looking at the speeches of A.Vassiliou and institutional texts of the of the State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia) and gain insight into the 'bottom up' perspectives of those who experience it (the mobile students). All three types of data, political speeches, online texts and interviews, are a form of discourse, which makes the three sets of data comparable, although it is appreciated that political speeches are often prepared as written texts (in part or whole) prior to delivery and online texts only exist in written form. Second, while drawing on both, *formal* (political speeches and institutional texts) and *semi-private* (semi-structured interviews) settings, offers a broader scope than a single set of data and allows examining the synergy/ disparity between the *top-down* and the *bottom-up* representations of Erasmus students' identities and the programme. Third, critical analysis of two types of empirical data, derived from two *genres* of discourse relating to the same general theme (Erasmus students and the realisation of their identities), is in line with *the principle of triangulation* (see Weiss & Wodak, 2003:22; Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; 2001; Wodak et al., 1999; 2010) and adds reliability to the findings.

In what follows each method of data collection used in the study will be discussed and background information on the data collected will be provided.

4.2 Political speeches

Apart from the political speeches of the EU Commissioner for Education, the official Erasmus website (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en accessed on 11/02/2016) offers factual and practical information about the European student programme. However, there are only a few other publically available official EU documents (see the links below[32]) that discuss the Erasmus programme and its impact on mobile students, primarily offering quantitative/statistical data on the Erasmus scheme (*Erasmus: Facts, Figures, Trends*) and literature on the outcomes of student mobility experience in relation to future employment (i.e., *Erasmus Impact Study).* This data is very "condensed" in scope and does not allow a researcher to tap into the top-down construction of Erasmus experience and attribution of European or other identities to exchange students, unlike the political speeches.

For the purposes of this study, it is understood here that a *speech* is "a structured verbal chain of coherent speech acts uttered on a special social occasion for a special purpose by a single person, and addressed to a more or less specific audience" (Reisigl, 2008: 243). Speeches can differ on a range of aspects, including some of the following: the *occasion* (including the time and place of the speech); the *length* of the speech; the choice of the main and secondary *topics*; the speaker's apparent and hidden agenda; the *status* of the speaker; the *addressees* (Wodak, 2009: 578, in Culpeper et al.).

When politics or political discourse is brought into question, the most salient genre seems to be "political speeches" (ibid.). Political speeches do not only carry high political authority, but they also articulate identities and policies, as they usually address a wide audience

[32] *Erasmus Impact Study* http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf (accessed on 11/02/2016);

Erasmus: Facts, Figures, Trends http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/statistics/ay-12-13/facts-figures_en.pdf (accessed on 11/02/2016)

(see Hansen, 2006:82-87). As regards the speeches of the European Commissioners, they have been characterised by Wodak & Weiss as "a specific type of a new sub-genre of political speeches" (see Wodak &Weiss, 2004: 235-42) and have been referred to as "visionary/speculative speeches" on Europe. According to the genre-specific features, they tend to be "consensus–oriented" and primarily argumentation-based, aiming at "making meaning of Europe" (idea, essence, substance), "organising Europe" (institutional forms of decision making and political framework) as well as "drawing borders" (inside/outside distinction), whereas the relation between all three of these dimensions form the basis of the Commissioners' speeches. The analysis of political speeches of the EU Commissioner offers insight into *intertextual* links with other preceding and/or ongoing discourses/texts (including those of the EU), while a closer study of *lexical* and *grammatical means of realisation*, permits the deconstruction of the *argumentation* and *persuasion strategies* and the *stance-taking* that the Commissioner adopts towards her claims.

Thus, by examining this sub-genre of discourse, it is hoped that the present study will permit a comparison with the mobile student discourse, enabling an examination of whether there are points of intertextuality or divergence between the two genres. At the same time, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the existing research on political speeches (Wodak, 2009; Reisigl, 2008; Wodak &Weiss, 2004; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001) as well as give a new insight into student mobility as it is constructed by the EU officials.

4.2.1. Data collection:

The *political speeches* selected for further analysis here were all presented by Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth who held this post between 2010 and 2013 (commensurate with the period of data collection for this thesis). Vassiliou's responsibilities involved contributing to the modernisation of Europe's

system of education, orientating towards "a better Europe"[33] by improving learning mobility (including the Erasmus programme) and developing links between formal education and subsequent employment opportunities for the young people[34].

Vassiliou's role was challenging, since her term as the EU Commissioner was concurrent not only with the economic crisis in Europe but also with the completion of the *Erasmus Mundus* programme. As the EU was making significant cuts in its budget (see Chapter 2 above for more details) the future of Erasmus was uncertain. The prevailing themes of Vassiliou's speeches reflect the historical, political and socio-economic context of the first decades of the twenty-first century, predominantly engaging in the promotion and popularisation of the new phase of Erasmus, the *Erasmus plus* programme (e.g., "Presentation of 'Erasmus for All' and 'Creative Europe'"[35]; "One Step up: European Agenda for Adult Learning" [36]; "State on play on 'Erasmus for All' and 'Creative Europe'"[37] and other speeches).

All official speeches delivered by Vassiliou have been archived electronically and are available to view at the European Commission's website: http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-14/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/index_en.htm (accessed on 04/06/2015). As the time frame in focus was the period between 2010 and 2012 (the time when the interviews with Erasmus students were recorded), only the speeches delivered during this period were considered for further analysis. The speeches that were selected for analysis were all those official speeches delivered by Vassiliou where the Commissioner explicitly talks about either "Erasmus students" and/or the "Erasmus programme". The data selection procedure was supplemented by keyword search (option available in *Microsoft Word*) with "Erasmus student (-s)" and "Erasmus programme", in order

[33] http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/about/priorities/index_en.htm (accessed on 03/06/2015)
[34] http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm (accessed on 02/04/2015)
[35] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-11-867_en.htm (accessed on 12/02/2016)
[36] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-128_en.htm (accessed on 12/02/2016)
[37] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-469_en.htm (accessed on 12/02/2016)

to ensure that every instance when the Commissioner referred to these explicitly in her speeches was taken into account. Three speeches were copied into a *Microsoft Office Word* programme to compile the corpus. Having selected the speeches all the relevant extracts where the Commissioner explicitly talks about either "Erasmus students" and/or "Erasmus programme" were highlighted.

The total word count of the three speeches was 4,192 words (see the full transcripts of three speeches selected for the analysis in Appendix 5). Table 1 below provides essential background information about each of the three speeches. According to *Rhetorical Genre Theory* (see Reisigl, 2008:244) when dealing with political speeches, such elements as: *the main function of the speech, the occasion on which the speech is delivered* and *the place of delivery* are considered to be significant and need to be taken into consideration as elements of "the narrow context" of speech production (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008:14; Reisigl, 2008:244). Namely *the place of delivery* provides information about the location of speech delivery; *the occasion of speech delivery* shows what type of speech it is and its degree of formality as well as its immediate/ intended audience; *the main function of the speech*, or the purpose and intentions of the speaker. These details are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Background information about the political speeches selected for the analysis based on DHA*

Speech (title, word count and date of delivery)	**Source**	**The place of delivery**	**The occasion of speech delivery**	**The main function of the speech**
1. Commissioner A. Vassiliou addresses *EU Youth Conference* (word count: 1,285) 4th of October, 2010	http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101004_en.htm (accessed on 12/12/14)	Leuven, Belgium	Commissioner A. Vassiliou presented the new *Youth on the Move* initiative at the *EU Youth Conference*, a regular local youth policy event that attracted more than 250 young Europeans and policy makers from all Member States. The aim of this conference was to continue the ongoing structured dialogue between young people from across Europe and the EU commissioners/ representatives.	Formation of public opinion and attitudes about *Youth on the Move* EU initiative.
2. Commissioner A. Vassiliou Speaks At *Youth On The Move Conference* (word count: 1,514) 5th of October, 2010	http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101005_en.htm (accessed on 12/12/14)	Antwerp, Belgium	This speech was given at the conference organised by the Flemish Ministry of Education and attended by around 300 delegates (including Minister Smet, Mrs Scheys, who are explicitly referenced in the Commissioner's opening lines, presumably the organisers or the honorary guests at the conference). The main purpose of the conference was to discuss the European Union's new (at the time) flagship initiative *Youth on the Move*, designed to increase the mobility of young people.	Formation of public opinion and attitudes about student mobility and employment possibilities for young people.
3. Commissioner A. Vassiliou *Learning mobility can help to fight the crisis*. (word count: 1,393)	http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-345_en.htm (accessed on 11/02/2015)	Copenhagen, Denmark	Conference to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme. Organised by the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation in cooperation with the Directorate-General for	Formation of public opinion and attitudes about how Erasmus scheme could develop in future, summarised in the "Erasmus

09th of May, 2012			Education and Culture of the European Commission. The celebrations of the Erasmus Programme were launched at a press conference by A. Vassiliou, who was joined by 66 "Erasmus ambassadors" from the 33 countries (one student and one university staff member had been chosen to represent each EU member state). In the opening lines of the Commissioner's address it is also evident that a member of Danish royal family is present and the Danish Minister for Research, Innovation and Higher Education.	Manifesto"[38] publication.

The EU Commissioner's speeches outlined in Table 1 included two opening speeches at conferences in Belgium, promoting the new mobility scheme "Youth on the Move" and one opening speech at a press conference in Denmark, to celebrate Erasmus's 25th anniversary.

Throughout the speeches selected here, the Commissioner promotes the role of student mobility and its impact, suggesting that the key function of her *opening speeches* relates to the formation of positive public opinions and attitudes towards the Erasmus scheme and the EU among the Europeans, relating to the second "field of action" (or "socially institutionalised purposes of discursive practices" discussed in more detail below), according to Reisigl's classification of *subgenres of political speeches* (Reisigl, 2007:34-35).

The political speeches selected for the analysis here both complement and provide another angle on the conceptualisation and representation of Erasmus student mobility and Erasmus students through a *top-down* "legitimate discourse" of the EU Commissioner. From the political speeches of A. Vassiliou a total of five extracts from each of the three speeches were selected

[38] http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2012/manifesto_en.pdf (accessed on 05/06/2015)

according to their relevance to the focus of the study (see above) and analysed. Due to the small size of the corpus, the data did not require any further categorisation apart from identification of the relevant extracts followed by detailed DHA-informed qualitative analysis of contents, discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation in the construction of *Erasmus students* and *Erasmus programme* representations in the discourse of the EU Commissioner.

4.3 Online publications of State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia.

State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia is an official representative and promoter of the Erasmus student mobility programme in the Republic of Latvia. Their responsibility is not only to promote the European exchange programme among Latvian universities' students and staff but also to inform the general public about what the programme is, what it does, its changing goals and objectives, as well as to organise various local and international initiatives, promoting the programme and finding new ways of improving its organisation. The State Education Development Agency is also responsible for organising international conferences, where other EU member states' representatives and/or Erasmus exchange programme's participants are invited to share their observations, statistical findings and recommendations for further improvements on the observed successes and/or shortcomings of the programme.

The type of texts collected from the State Education Development Agency's web page represents the narrative genre similar to news reporting, which is primarily focused on the representations of actions and people involved in them. The texts that have been collected for the purposes of the analysis of institutional discourses of Erasmus programme and Erasmus students resemble what Cameron & Panoviç (2014) call as "news stories", or the kind of stories where the events are not simply recounted but structured and presented in a way that indicates

a certain point or aspect of the story, with the focus on the most important aspect, according to the author of the publication (or in this case, the governmental organisation, representing the European exchange initiative in Latvia), adopting a specific evaluative stance. Within the CDA paradigm adopted in this thesis, it is considered that all discourse is "not only socially constituted but also constitutive" (Fairclough, 1995:55). Therefore, having adopted critical discourse analytic stance, it is of interest here to study the "placement" and "framing" of information in the online texts, the lexical and grammatical choices that contribute to a construction of a particular stance, as well as considering these texts against the wider context of European student mobility, the EU Commissioner's speeches and discourses of Erasmus students.

4.3.1. Data collection:

Before starting the collection of relevant texts, with the goal of studying institutional representations of Erasmus programme and Erasmus students in Latvia, the choice fell on the official web page of the State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia (www.viaa.gov.uk), as an official representative of the Erasmus programme in Latvia. This is a reliable official source of information and has an archive of all informative publications made by the agency with reference to the Erasmus programme and Erasmus students from 2010 up to 2014.

Corpus building of the relevant texts from the web pages of the State Education Development Agency followed the steps recommended by Wodak & Krzyzanowski (2008:35) as essential in corpus-building when working with online media and which are illustrated in Figure 2:

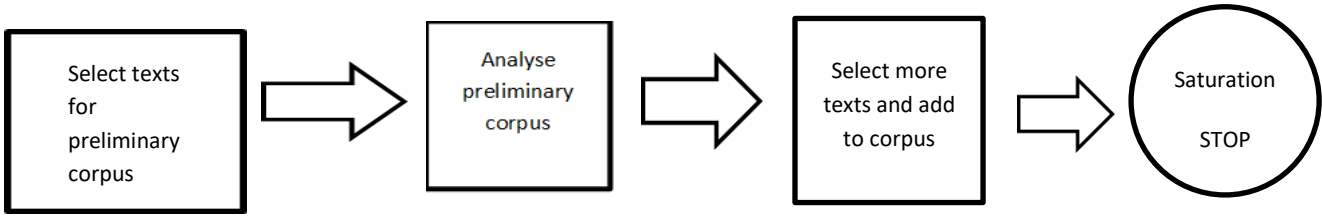

Figure 2 Cyclical corpus-building for qualitative research. ***Source*** Wodak & Krzyzanowski (2008: 35)

Thus, initially all the relevant pages of the State Education Development Agency were studied, starting from the publications in 2010 and finishing with the publications in 2014. Throughout the initial selection process, the key goal was to select descriptive texts or extracts that describe either Erasmus programme or Erasmus students. Following the initial text selection stage, only the relevant extracts were selected, translated from Latvian into English and preliminary corpus analysis was conducted. Next, more texts were studied and a small corpus of relevant extracts was compiled. It is important to note that the term "corpus" here is used in purely qualitative sense, as against initial expectations, there was only a limited number of extracts, where either Erasmus programme or Erasmus students were referred to in descriptive – evaluative terms, necessary for further *macro* (thematic) and *micro* (lexico-grammatical analysis). This is why, the data collected from studying this corpus is only used to provide insight into the institutional image of the European exchange programme and mobile students that appears to be promoted by the Latvian State Education Development Agency on their official web page. The last stage of data selection can be found in Appendix 11, where the relevant sections of the selected corpus were translated from Latvian into English and labels in the form of tags/comments were

attributed to different sections of the corpus, in order to see whether there were any recurrent themes or constructs before moving to lexico-grammatical analysis of the relevant excerpts.

4.4 Interviews

The main set of data for the study was collected via interviews. A *qualitative research interview* has been compared to "a conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984:102) and is even considered to be "the gold standard of qualitative research" (Silverman, 2000:51). Interviews have been used for decades across the social sciences, while in applied linguistics the interview as a method of empirical enquiry has gained popularity only more recently (Talmy, 2010). Among the reasons why interviewing has been chosen as one of the methods of data collection for this study is because it resembles a common aspect of social life surrounding people, and is present both in the media and everyday life (Dornyei, 2007: 134). Interview as a genre involves many conventions that are used by people in other communicative situations/ contexts (e.g., turn-taking, expectations for participant roles, etc.) (ibid.). Some scholars of applied linguistics, who have used interview as a method of data collection, support this opinion and argue that interviews offer insight into research participants' identities, experiences, beliefs and attitudes towards different phenomena (e.g., Block, 2000; Pavlenko, 2007; Richards, 2003, 2009).

The three most common types of interviews: *the structured interview*, *the unstructured interview* and *the semi-structured* interview. The *structured interview* resembles "a spoken questionnaire" or a survey (Richards, 2009:184), as it aims to collect spoken data in a controlled form, eliminating individual variation as far as possible, in order for the results to be quantifiable. The *unstructured interview* has no predetermined questions or structure and therefore is predominantly lead by the interviewee with minimal intervention from the

interviewer. Although unstructured interview can produce "in-depth" data, administering this type of interview as well as the follow-up analysis are not unproblematic (Richards, 2003; Dornyei, 2008). The most commonly used type of interview and the one chosen in this study is the *semi-structured interview*, which as Dornyei (2008:136) claims represents a type of "compromise" between the two other types of interview, benefitting from the strengths of both. This type of interview requires pre-prepared prompts and guiding questions, or "an interview guide" (Dornyei, 2008), while it allows for a flexible and open-ended format, where the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised by the interviewer in an explanatory manner. This is particularly suitable within the scope of the present study, interested both in the breadth and depth of Erasmus students' personal experiences, views and attitudes towards mobility and its impact on them.

Regardless of what type of interview the researcher opts for, just as any method of data collection, interviews have their strengths and weaknesses that the researcher needs to take into account. An advantage of the interview is that it is a relatively natural and socially acceptable way of data collection, which can be used in a wide range of settings with a focus on many issues. Also, the presence of the interviewer allows for a flexible approach towards the interviewee, as they can probe and explore the emergent issues in more depth, deviating from the "interview guide" whenever necessary, thereby obtaining rich data (Dörnyei, 2008:143).

A drawback of interviews is the time required to set up and conduct them, and the crucial need for the interviewer to have good communication skills (ibid.). Additionally, due to the format of the interview, which excludes anonymity, there is either the possibility for the respondent to exaggerate the answers in order to impress the interviewer and be too wordy, or to be nervous and inarticulate due to the interview setting. As a result, the researcher is likely to be faced with "the observer's paradox" (Labov, 1972), or in other words, a range of factors of the interview setting that have an impact on the interviewee and *what* (the actual content)

and *how* (discursive choices) it has been produced. The strengths and weaknesses of the interview as a method of data collection have to be taken into account by the researcher in the course of the interview as well as during the analyses and interpretation of the data (the way the observer's paradox was dealt with in the present study will be dealt with below).

4.4.1 Preparation for the Interviews

My main research interest was with the "subjective" way Erasmus students use discourse to construct identities during their reporting of the stay abroad. In order to ensure maximum efficiency in the outcomes of the research interview, a number of "carefully designed steps" (Dörnyei, 2008:136) were taken. To begin with, previous studies of student mobility (see Chapter 2) were consulted and their interview guides were studied, particularly those that used interviews as the method of data collection and worked with discourse and identity in the context of student mobility (i.e., Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Dervin, 2008). While Murphy-Lejeune's research questions were primarily focused on the development of adaptation to the host country and international student environment, Dervin's interview questions were centred around exchange students' reflection on their daily activities and routines, as well as the representation of self in relation to the new contexts and others. Both of these scholars' interview guides, as well as previously reviewed literature on identity and its construction in discourse, informed my choice of interview themes and questions.

Following the initial drafting of the interview questions, in early February 2010, I requested permission to be present at three of the Latvian language classes at the University of Latvia specially designed for Erasmus students. This allowed me to meet some of the Erasmus students before and after the language class and have an informal (not recorded) conversation with them to gain some ethnographic insights into their life in the host country, or in Brewer's (2000:1) terms "to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or

'setting'" held by this group. Also, further preparation work for interviews with Erasmus students included familiarisation with publicly available information, particularly targeting this group, such as Erasmus Student Network Riga (ESN Riga) *Facebook*[39], *Instagram*[40] and *Twitter pages*[41]. Familiarising myself with the publically available information online, allowed me to gain an insight into the Erasmus students' life outside the university, particularly the kind of activities (social events and trips) they were encouraged to take part in during their stay by ESN (the organisation supporting and developing student exchange locally, nationally and internationally). These ethnographic insights further helped me develop and refine the interview questions about the life and daily encounters that Erasmus students have from a real-world perspective.

In order to test the remaining flaws, limitations or other weaknesses within the interview guide, pilot interviews were held with two Erasmus students in order to make any necessary revisions prior to the actual interviews. Therefore, students from the Latvian language class that I was observing on 25th of February, 2010 were invited to take part in a single interview session. Following the pilot interviews, final adjustments to improve the quality of the interview questions were made to form the interview guide (i.e., having had to make clarifications in the course of the interview, some of the questions were rephrased to make them easier to understand for the interviewees).

Since one of the aims of the study was to include "subjective" aspects of the discursive construction of Erasmus students' identities, a topic-oriented qualitative interview guide was constructed. The interview questions aimed to determine interviewees' views, attitudes, opinions as well as the level of awareness of their "identities". Therefore, the interview structure was made to resemble as far as possible an open-ended private conversation, since the

[39] https://www.facebook.com/ESN.Riga (accessed on 19/04/2016)
[40] https://www.instagram.com/esn_riga/ (accessed on 19/04/2016)
[41] https://twitter.com/esn_riga (accessed on 19/04/2016)

semi-formal style of interviews allows the respondents to produce utterances and sequences of thoughts without being interrupted by the interviewer. As a result, the data that has been collected from the interviews can offer insight into the patterns of identity construction and expression of opinions by individual Erasmus students reflecting on their stay abroad.

The interviews followed a protocol in which the questions were grouped around several thematic areas (question sets). This method of questioning allows the interviewer to elicit longer narratives which reveal the interviewees' feelings and attitudes towards their student mobility experience and relations with others (both present and absent in the host country) as well as whenever possible to illustrate their arguments with 'stories'. Predominantly, the questions (& answers) were "indirect", therefore even though the answers did not yield immediate or direct insights/references to identity, they provide useful clues that lead to/ constitute identity construction in discourse (Wodak et al., 2009: 107). The topics for the interviews covered such themes as the students' previous travel experience and initial expectations, their daily life in Latvia, their initial/subsequent contacts in the host country, their understanding of the goals of the Erasmus programme, as well as their overall evaluation of their stay. In the course of the interviews, the following *interview guide* was adopted:

Table 1: *Interview guide*

1. **Self: Background and Expectations:**
   a. What kind of experience living/visiting abroad did you have before coming to Latvia?
   b. What were your expectations of the Erasmus programme in terms of:
      i. language learning/speaking,
      ii. meeting others,
      iii. living on your own;
   c. To what extent have these expectations been fulfilled or not? Explain why/ why not.

1. **Self: the Actual Experience**
   a. What were your first thoughts/ impressions after you'd arrived?
   b. What are they like now?
   c. Could you describe your daily life here, in Latvia? What is it like? How does it compare to your life back home?
   d. What does "being an Erasmus student" mean to you? How has this affected you/ your outlook on:
      i. life,

ii. yourself,
iii. others (Erasmus, locals, compatriots, your family);

2. Self and Others:

a. Who have you met since you've been in Latvia? Who are your friends? How did you become friends?
b. What have you learnt about others (back home, here in the host country) and about yourself?
c. Have you met/become friends with any locals? Why/why not?
d. Do you keep in touch with people from home (family, friends)? What do you talk about?

The interview guide was not followed stringently and at times the order of questions was altered or some of the questions were skipped because the answers had appeared in an earlier response, or the interviewer requested clarification, etc. The interview was therefore conducted in a form of a conversation with the questions used as a guide (in line with Reisigl & Wodak, 200 1).

4.4.2 Data Collection:

Having finalised the *Interview guide*, the search for current (at the time) in-coming Erasmus students willing to take part in the research interview began by obtaining an approval (see Appendix 6) to the proposal to conduct research involving adults (over 16 years) from The Ethics Committee of the School Of Social Science, History & Philosophy at Birkbeck, University of London. Following the approval from the Ethics Committee, the initial contact was established with the staff at the International Relations Department for International and Exchange Students at the two major state universities in Riga (Latvia): the *University of Latvia* and *Riga Technical University*.

Being a part-time member of staff (Lecturer and Researcher at the Department of Applied Linguistics) at both universities at the time (2010-2012), it was relatively easy for me to find the contact persons for the incoming Erasmus students at the respective universities. Besides, due to my status at both universities, I represented a trustworthy and reliable person, making the administrative members of staff responsible for incoming Erasmus students more

willing to collaborate and respond to the request to forward my email inviting exchange students to take part in the study.

At the time the research process began (early 2010), the contact persons for the incoming Erasmus students at both universities were sent an e-mail (see Appendix 10), requesting them to forward it to the Erasmus exchange students at their respective universities.

The e-mail was forwarded to 112 Erasmus exchange students (65 Erasmus students at the University of Latvia and 47 Erasmus exchange students at Riga Technical University) at both universities who were enrolled on the courses at the time, with a request to arrange an appointment with the interviewer. Inevitably, it was expected that only a small number of students would respond to the request and agree to be interviewed. My concern was similar to that of Ann Beaven (2012), who experienced a high number of 'drop-out students', who despite having agreed to be interviewed did not turn up to the actual interview. Besides, I was concerned with students' response to me, a stranger and a member of staff at their host university, when sharing their experiences of being Erasmus students in Latvia. Moreover, I needed to arrange the interview meetings with the students at the end of February, hoping to hold the interviews between March 2010 and June 2010, as I was informed by the International/Exchange student Departments at both universities that the majority of Erasmus students stay in Latvia for six months (October to March/ January to June) or ten months (October to June). Therefore, by interviewing them at some point during this period, it would have given Erasmus students a substantial period of residence in the host country (at least 5 months). The timing of the interviews was dictated by the need for the students to have already had a substantial period of residence in the host country, so that the study could shed light on the extent to which EU goals for Erasmus, such as establishing social contacts with other Europeans, developing affiliation and identification with Europe were achieved. The interviews

aimed to provide a snapshot in time, a self-reflective retrospect on Erasmus at the end/ towards the end of the stay.

The selection criteria for research interviews were guided by the following two *sampling strategies* (Dornyei's, 2008: 127-129): *homogeneous sampling* and *convenience sampling*. First, *homogeneous sampling* was opted for as it is likely to allow for a quicker "saturation" (Green & Thorogood, 2009), since the criteria for selecting study participants are based on their shared experience, relevant to a given study. In my case, having selected the incoming Erasmus students as a group who have had at least five months' experience of studying and living in the host country (Latvia), it allowed for an in-depth analysis, recognizing recurrent patterns in identity construction among the individuals with similar characteristics (i.e., study abroad).

Second, *convenience sampling* as eventually employed here has been described as "the least desirable but the most common sampling strategy" (Dornyei, 2008:129). Due to time pressure and difficulty in finding sufficient Erasmus students who would agree to take part in the interviews, it was necessary to extend the *homogeneous sampling* by relying on *convenience sampling*. Thus, I was forced to rely on the willing participation of students among this group (in-coming Erasmus students who had stayed in Latvia for at least five months prior to the interview), rather than refine my selection further by other possible criteria (e.g., age, (bi-)nationality, ethnicity, mother tongue or other). Although this may have had an impact on the data (see *Limitations of study* section below), however the fact that the participants were all willing to take part in the interviews allowed for a rich and varied data set to be collected.

Initially, I aimed to interview between 20 and 25 students, in line with previous qualitative studies in applied linguistics involving Erasmus students and employing interview techniques (Dervin, 2006; Beaven, 2012; Kalocsai, 2014). However following the email sent out by the university staff to 121 Erasmus students, 19 expressed an interest in being

interviewed. Of these, only six students volunteered and attended the interview. Even though qualitative research does not require a large number of respondents and predominantly aims to describe aspects of "idiosyncratic experience", rather than determining the "mean experience" within a given group (Polkinghorne, 2005), this number seemed too insignificant to offer sufficiently rich and varied insights into Erasmus students' experiences and identity construction, as it was initially hoped.

In qualitative studies, it is advisable that the participant selection process remains open as long as possible, as every new account can expand or even challenge the previous findings (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, two more attempts to invite and record the interviews with Erasmus students were made in February 2011 and February 2012, following the same steps as outlined above. This resulted in a further nine recorded interviews with Erasmus students (four in 2011 and five in 2012), totalling 15 interviews between March 2010 and April 2012.

Upon receiving confirmation emails from the students, agreeing to take part in the research interviews, they were sent a short questionnaire (see Appendix 1), requiring them to fill in some factual information about themselves, in order to determine demographic details (e.g. age, gender, length of the stay, etc.). Filling in the name was left optional to the students, as in order to maintain confidentiality a pseudonym was going to be used for each participant throughout the study (see Appendix 7 for the list of pseudonyms issued to the participating Erasmus students). The students could either return the questionnaire prior to the interview by replying to my email or alternatively print it out and bring it along with them to the interview. The respondents unanimously sent their questionnaires by email.

The research interviews with incoming Erasmus students, for their convenience, were conducted in Riga (Latvia) at the premises of the University of Latvia, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities in the student café 'Amica', in the afternoons following the Erasmus students' Latvian language class. Another reason why this location was preferred to a more

formal setting was mainly due to its informal and relaxed atmosphere as well as the presence of other local, exchange and international students.

As the interviewees and the interviewer did not share the same native language, English was used as a *lingua franca*. This was also the language that the exchange students used for communication among themselves and with the university staff on campus. All students were either native speakers of English or had a high degree of fluency in English, as this is one of the requirements for incoming Erasmus students at both universities, based on the internationally acclaimed language tests (including IELTS, CAE, TOEFL and other)[42] . All of these factors are believed to have established a reasonably comfortable, unthreatening atmosphere for the interviewees.

Most interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and were digitally recorded with the help of the *Audacity*® application (a free software, cross-platform digital audio editor and recording application). The total corpus of transcribed interviews consists of 42,037 words. On average 2,802 words were transcribed per person (see Appendix 3 for all Interview transcripts). The interview proceeded in the following way: prior to the start of the interview, the students were given time to read a brief paper detailing '*Project Information'* (see Appendix 1) in English and to ask any questions. This decision aligned with Dörnyei (2008:140), who claims that "understanding the purpose of the questions will increase the motivation of the interviewee to respond openly and in detail". The interviewees were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the project at any time without providing justifications for their decisions, and/or remove anything they said from the recording if they so wished. Also, the participants

[42] University of Latvia. International programmes at the University of Latvia. http://www.studyinlatvia.in/pdf/International_Programmes_at_the_University_of_Latvia.pdf (accessed on 03/03/2016)
Riga Technical University. Student exchange requirements. http://www.rtu.lv/en/content/view/3763/1983/lang,en/ (accessed on 03/02/2016)

were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. Following this initial stage, all of the participants agreed to sign the *Consent form (*see a sample of *Consent form* in Appendix 2).

This was followed by a period of small talk in order to enhance a relaxed atmosphere and establish rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. According to Fontana & Frey (2005), it is crucial at the opening stage of the interview to encourage a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere in which the interviewee can feel comfortable to express him/herself freely and therefore was not recorded. It was only on completion of this initial stage that the interviewer asked for the interviewee's permission to start the recording.

4.4.3 Demographic data and subjects

The demographic variables established from the preliminary questionnaires, providing some background information on the interviewees, are presented in Table 2 (below), using pseudonyms rather than the real names of the respondents to protect their right to privacy. Categories similar to those of Murphy-Lejeune (2001), Papatsiba (2006) and Dervin (2006), such as age, gender, level of study, the subject of study, total length of stay abroad, previous experience abroad and type of accommodation have been used. The individual variables were collected for the purposes of establishing the personal and educational background of the interviewees, while previous experience of travel had been claimed to have an effect not only on the stay abroad but also the very choice of going abroad, as well as the attitudes towards Europe and meeting other Europeans (see Coleman, 2006; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002: 52-54; Van Mol, 2014 as discussed in Chapter 2 above). Also, it appeared from earlier research that the choice of accommodation plays an important role in the socialisation patterns during the stay (Van Mol, 2014; Dervin, 2006 – see a more detailed overview in Chapter 2 above). This demographic data is schematically presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: *Demographic Variables on the Research Participants*

Name	Date of the interview	Country of origin	Age	Gender	Level of Study	Subject of study	Length of stay abroad in months	Previous experience of independent stay abroad	Type of accommodation
Nick	04/03/2010	USA/ Latvia	23	M	BA	International Area Studies/ Political Studies	10	None	Rented a (shared) flat
Ulrieke	08/03/2010	Austria	25	F	MA	Baltic Sea Region Studies	10	Over 1 year study abroad experience	University accommodation
Gerald	12/04/2010	Austria	29	M	MA	Teacher training	10	Over 1 year of study abroad experience	University accommodation
Kristina	27/04/2010	Canada/ Latvia	26	F	MA	Baltic Sea Region Studies	10	None	Rented a flat on her own
Jan	06/05/2010	Czech Republic	21	M	BSc	Business Studies	6	None	University accommodation
Lissi	30/05/2010	Estonia	20	F	BA	English Language and Applied Linguistics	6	None	University accommodation
Ardi	29/03/2011	Estonia	24	M	MA	History	6	None	Rented a (shared) flat
Johannes	16/04/2011	Germany	21	M	BA	Theology	6	None	Rented a (shared) flat
Britta	07/05/2011	Germany	23	F	BA	German language and Applied Linguistics	10	Over 1 year of work abroad experience	University accommodation
Alisa	12/05/2011	Germany / Uzbekistan	19	F	BA	German language and Applied Linguistics	6	None	University accommodation
Anna	21/02/2012	Hungary	23	F	BA	German language and Applied Linguistics	6	Under one month	University accommodation
Alfonso	22/02/2012	Italy	25	M	MA	Geography/ Ecology	6	Under one month	Rented a shared flat

Chie	22/05/2012	Japan	23	F	MA	English Language and Applied Linguistics	10	None	University accommodation
Kasia	01/06/2012	Poland	24	F	MA	English Language and Applied Linguistics	6	None	University accommodation
Katarzyna	09/06/2012	Poland	24	F	MA	English Language and Applied Linguistics	10	None	University accommodation

Table 2 presents all of the interview participants in a chronological manner, with the date of the interview determining their appearance in the table. Other categories seemed to be too diverse, making it more difficult to categorise the participants.

The majority of students were aged between 24 and 25 years, although their ages ranged from 19 to 29 years. Also, the number of female (9) interviewees only slightly exceeded the number of male (6) interviewees. Ten of them were pursuing Master degree studies and eight Bachelor degree studies. While the majority of interviewees were students of Linguistics (7), there were also students taking various other courses: Baltic Sea Region Studies (2), Business/ Economics (2), Teacher training (1), Geography and Ecology (1), Political Studies (1) and History (1).

Interviewees came from both European (Austria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, etc.) and non-European countries (Canada, Japan, USA). Among the interviewees there were three bi-national students (Latvian/American, Latvian/Canadian and Uzbek/German). That is to say, their parents were of different nationalities/ethnicities. Of particular interest, considering the context of the present study, are Nick (a Latvian/American) and Kristina (Latvian/Canadian). Both of them claimed having visited Latvia prior to the exchange and had some distant family members in Latvia. Also, for both, the choice of going on an exchange to Latvia was motivated by their wish to learn the Latvian language (which neither of them had mastered prior to the exchange), as well as to learn about some elements of Latvian culture and history.

Ten out of 15 interviewees spent six months (from September until February) studying in Latvia and the remaining five students stayed in Latvia for the duration of the entire academic year, from September to June. Most of the students had never lived abroad for an extended period of time previously, though Anna and Alfonso had lived in another country for a short period of time (under a month) as a part of their respective secondary school student exchange programmes. Also, three of the interviewees (Ulrieke, Gerald and Britta) had resided independently (without their families) in a foreign country for a period longer than one year prior to the study abroad, for either work (Britta) or study (Ulrieke, Gerald) experience outside of any exchange programme context. Most students opted for the university-provided accommodation, while five interviewees (Nick, Kristina, Ardi, Johannes, Alfonso) rented a flat either on their own or with local students.

4.4.4 Transcription Conventions

The first part of data handling involved converting the recorded interview data into a textual format. This is a very time-consuming and demanding process, requiring the researcher to make some decisions prior to beginning the transcription process. With regard to the transcription of oral discourse, any transcription involves the researcher's interpretation, or a "retelling" of the original interaction (Lapadat, 2000). In transcribing interviews with Erasmus students, similar to Reisigl & Wodak (2001) and Wodak et al.,(2009), I opted for the "denaturalized transcript" (Oliver et al., 2005), or "autographic transcription method". This method aims at a *verbatim* representation of speech, while still aiming to achieve a "full and faithful transcription" (Cameron, 1996: 33). This transcription method is less concerned with prosody, and more with the substance of the interview, i.e. the meanings and construction of identities created and shared during the interview. It allows the researcher to learn what the talk in focus says about different aspects of the participant's life, or what is embodied by the given

discourse. In order to capture these embodied discourses, the interview transcripts are used as the source of data analysis.

I follow the transcription conventions adapted from Reisigl & Wodak (2001) and Reisigl & Wodak (2009), referred to as a *minimal type of transcription* that is suitable for many purposes and as explained above in *Transcription conventions used in this study* (see p.8). Thus, the oral texts were transcribed using Standard British English orthography and without any interventions or changes to them other than the use of punctuation (e.g., full stops, commas). In the transcripts the speech runs on from line to line. For ease of analysis, every line of the interview transcript has been numbered.

As English, which was the linguistic medium of all the interviews, was not the native language for the majority of the interviewees, any grammatical or stylistic anomalies which occurred in the course of the recordings (interviews) were not corrected and instead transcribed *verbatim*. Lastly, interdiscursivity (whenever the interviewee "staged" or enacted a dialogue between themselves and other(-s)) was transcribed by means of *italics* following Murphy-Lejeune (2001), who claims that the use of italics helps the visual separation of different discourses whenever open references are made to the utterances other people have produced and that have been "staged" by the interviewee.

Once transcribed, the data was subjected to analysis using the DHA framework, which will be detailed in the following sections.

4.5 Analytical framework: Study design and categories of analysis

Discourse Historical Approach offers a useful framework for a comparative study of discourses of Erasmus students and political speeches of the EU Commissioner. When working with discourse data, DHA scholars (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wodak et al., 2009) resort to "a three-dimensional analytical apparatus" and begin by conducting

analysis of contents, in which they identify the most prominent topics, relevant to the focus of their study, the macro semantic propositions and elements of interdiscursivity/ intertextuality. Next, they analyse the use of *discursive strategies* followed by the analysis of context-dependent *linguistic means of realisation*. It is this analytical sequence that has been presented schematically in Figure 3 below and that forms the basis for the analysis of political speeches and empirical interviews with Erasmus students in the present study.

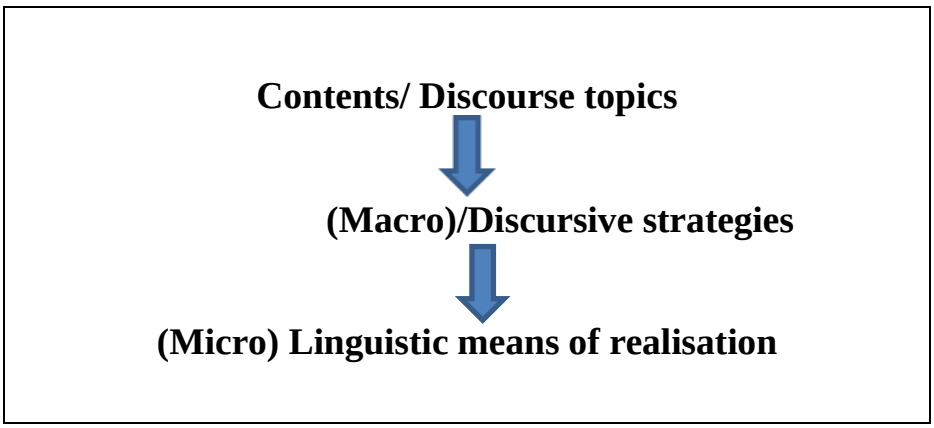

Figure 3: Levels of analysis in the Discourse Historical Approach

In the sections that follow, each "dimension" of the analytical apparatus presented in *Figure 3* will be unpacked and its application for the analysis of speeches and interviews in the present study will be elaborated.

4.4.1. Contents/ Discourse topics

As there were only three political speeches that suited the scope of the present study, it was not necessary to make extensive notes on the recurrent themes/ topics and it sufficed to select and highlight the relevant extracts and add the keyword(-s) assigned to them in the comments on the margins. However, as the interview data was more extensive, it involved not only coding by keyword (-s) attribution but also required further organising it into comprehensible tables in order to draw out any emerging patterns or inconsistencies. Thus, the

initial content analysis of the interviews required both inductive and deductive reasoning, taking into consideration the "primary themes" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), or the interview agenda, informed by the literature review and the review of publicly available information on Erasmus students. At the same time, the "secondary topics" (ibid.), or the topics that were initiated by the interviewees themselves, were taken into account and are included in "The Notes on recurrent themes and relevant extracts" (see Appendix 6). These notes do not only include the keyword(s) that have been assigned to the relevant extracts but they also show the "vignettes" (Duff, 2009), short narratives that provide a description of events or participants' experiences and encounters, including a back reference to the lines in transcript and the abbreviation of the author's name (a pseudonym). However, this data had to be rearranged and reorganised further in order to carry on with analysis and interpretation of the findings, requiring a good data display (Dornyei, 2008).

"Matrix of Topics" (see Wodak, 2002:150; Wodak et al., 2009: 30;) has been used by DHA scholars to aid and support the initial stage of data interpretation and display the emerging *macro thematic areas* (Wodak et al., 1999, 2009: Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Here, the adaptation of Wodak et al's., (1999) *Matrix of Topics* (see Appendix 8) is used to display *the thematic content* which has been formulated, based on the literature review and close analysis of the interview transcripts, keywords and vignettes. However, the Matrix of Topics as used by Wodak et al. (1999; 2009) had to be adapted to suit the context of this study, where identity construction involved three communities (i.e., Erasmus, Locals and Compatriots), who Erasmus students inevitably interact with and explicitly refer to in their discourses, as previous studies have also shown and as evidenced in the data (Coleman, 2006; 2013; Dervin, 2006; 2007). Therefore, informed by the post-structuralist theories of identity and discourse (see Chapter 3), that identity is constructed in relation to "an Other" (Ricoeur, 1992; Martin, 1995), as a "mirror image of another", all the *discourse topics* identified in the

interview data were sorted into one of the three categories: *self and Erasmus*, *self and locals* and *self and compatriots*, or sometimes, where a comparison between the groups was made into a "cross-category", as shown in the *Matrix of Topics* (Appendix 8). Therefore, the themes identified in the data were split between the groups/communities, depending on the references made by the speaker in relation to them.

Once all the *discourse topics* were recorded, a *macro-topic*, which served as a common/overarching theme, was devised in relation to the macro-topic and subsuming a number of *sub-topics*, representative of the theme. Although, compared to the more generic and broad macro-topics, the sub-topics were less representative in terms of their numbers, detailed analysis of the sub-topics revealed the *subtleties* of the individual variation and interpretation of context-determined representations of self and other social actors, which is important in a qualitative study (Richards, 2005). To illustrate this, the following extract from *The Matrix of Topics* is shown:

(A.) Journey into Erasmus community: adaptation/socialisation

1. initial shock of entry (N 3) (L 596-599; An 943-947; Ge 1685;)
2. from strangeness to familiarisation with the environment (N 4) (L 565-570; Ar 1110-1124; Ge 1686-1687; Ka 2093-2099)
3. from homesickness/loneliness to establishing friendships (N 7) (Al 56-61; 82-86; Kr 272-278; Ka 2093-2094; Br 1343-1346; Ch 1431-1432;1437-1439; J 1786-1787; Kat 2208-2213;2233-2234)
4. Erasmus friendly family (N 7) (L 675-682; J 1787-1790; 1980-1987; Kat 2208-2213; U 2586-259; Al 794-796; An 954-958; Ka 2072-2076;)
5. establishing the common ground (N 4) (L 572-575; Ard 1204-1208; J 1750-1754; Jo 1933-1936; 1947-1958)

(B) Creating representations of self and others:

1. Erasmus unity in diversity (N 5) (A: 103-115; L.:683-686; An.:1039-1044/ 1047-1052; Ard: 1133-1142;Br.: 1364-1368)
2. Making sense of differences by stereotyping (N 3)
   - Spanish fiesta (Li: 727-730)
   - "Typical Portuguese" (Kat 2266-2275)
   - Poles are thieves (Ka: 2136-2146; Kat.: 2275-2280)

Letters (A, B, etc.), in front of the headings in bold are used for organising chronologically the macro-topics, which emerge from the analysis of discourse topics. The numbering (1, 2, 3, etc.) lists the sub-topics that relate to the overarching macro topic and are also ordered

chronologically. First brackets following the sub-topic (e.g., N 5) demonstrate the number of occurrences by different interviewees (out of the total of 15 interviewees) throughout the interview data who raise the same/similar theme. As regards the next brackets, (Ka: 2136-2146; Kat.: 2275-2280), here the letters stand for the interviewees' pseudonym abbreviations (see Appendix 7) together with the reference to the lines to be found in the Interview Transcript (see Appendix 5).

As regards "saturation" related to each sub-theme and its representativeness in this case, I adopted the stance that Wodak and her associates take, that even a single instance/ occurrence touched upon in an interview or a political speech may be analysed and conclusions are drawn based on this evidence (e.g., Wodak, 2009; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Similarly to Wodak (2009), I am aware that the present study's main interest is with the way that *individuals* construct their identities in the given context and even few and far between examples of a certain thematic content may offer insight into the wider phenomenon of identity construction that may occur among the representatives of this group. This resonates with the claim that Krane *et al*. (1997: 214) make:

> Placing a frequency count after a category of experiences is tantamount to saying how important it is; thus value is derived by number. In many cases, rare experiences are no less meaningful, useful, or important than common ones. In some cases, the rare experience may be the most enlightening one.

For that reason, the frequency of occurrences is only presented here for reference, in order to show greater transparency and demonstrate thematic dispersion across the interview data, yet even the thematic patterns found as few as two times across the data are selected for an in-depth linguistic analysis (to be discussed in the next section).

4.5.2. Discursive strategies and their linguistic forms of realisation

Once the contents or topics of the discourse being analysed were established, in line with the DHA analytical framework, the analysis turned to the *discursive strategies*. The discursive strategies are heuristically linked to the research questions listed at the end of Chapter 3, adapted from Reisigl & Wodak (2001:101). In the definition of "discursive strategy", Wodak (2001) refers to it as the more or less intentional plan of discursive practices that is resorted to with the aim of achieving a certain social, psychological, political or linguistic aim.

In the analysis and discussion of the interviews that follow, I draw on the earlier studies of *national identity* by Wodak and her associates (De Celia et al., 2001; Wodak et al., 2009:33-34) and adopt their use of *macro strategies* that contribute to *construction*, *perpetuation* or *justification*, *transformation* and *demontage* or *dismantling* of (national) identity in discourse. Although analytically these strategies are distinct from one another, they tend to occur simultaneously in a discursive act, and help speakers to construct their interests (Chilton, 2004:78). Macro-strategies can also serve to construct and manipulate *positive self and negative other representation*, which also correspond to identity construction in discourse.

The most comprehensive of these discursive strategies are *constructive strategies* that are used to establish a certain (national) identity by drawing on unification, identification and solidarity as well as differentiation (Wodak et al., 2009:33). *Strategies of perpetuation* tend to preserve, support and/or protect a (national) identity that is threatened. *Strategies of justification* are considered to be a sub-group of macro-strategies, which by drawing on national history, reinstate and support "a common national self-perception" (ibid.). *Strategies of transformation*, as the name suggests, aim to transform an already established national identity and its components into another identity, usually with the help of rhetorical persuasion. Particularly useful in the context of the present study are the strategies of presupposition/emphasis of sameness (*strategies of assimilation*) and the strategies of presupposition/ emphasis of difference (*strategies of dissimilation*). Linguistically, *strategies*

of assimilation attempt to create a temporal, spatial, interpersonal similarity and homogeneity between different social groups and may draw on either of the macro-functions (i.e., constructive, destructive, perpetuating or justifying). *Strategies of dissimilation* (cf. also Matouschek, Wodak & Januschek 1995; Matouschek & Wodak 1995; Wodak & Matouschek 1993) create a temporal, interpersonal or territorial difference and heterogeneity in reference to the social groups in question by drawing on the same macro-functions as *the strategies of assimilation* (shown above). These macro strategies are realised by a number of argumentation schemes (i.e., topoi) and their respective linguistic means of realisation detailed in Wodak et al., (2009: 36-42) and adapted for the analyses and discussion of *political speeches*, *online institutional texts* and *interviews* throughout the present study as shown in the table below:

Table 3 Discursive *macro strategies for construction of social actors and their identity in discourse*

Strategy	**Argumentation schemes (topoi)**	**Means of realisation**
Strategy of Justification and Relativisation (i.e., the main function of this strategy is to restore, maintain and defend a common "national perception", which has been "tainted" in one way or another)		
Shift of Blame and Responsibility – strategy of emphasizing the difference between "us" and "them"/ strategy of isolation and/or singularisation	– topos of ignorance – topos of comparison/ topos of difference	– lexical units with semantic components creating difference/ singularisation, parallelisms
Downplaying/ Trivialisation – strategy emphasising negative sameness or negative common features	– topos of comparison/ topos of similarity	– lexical units with levelling semantic components
– balancing one thing against another	– topos of comparison/ *locus a minore*	– 'yes-but' figures, suggestive icons (one-sided weighting of topics manifested as detailed presentation vs. brief reference)
– strategy of avoidance and strategy of euphemizing (in reference to linguistic representation of the responsible social actors and in reference to the representation of negative actions and events)		– passive (agent deletion), of euphemising (in reference to the vague personal reference, linguistic representation of the nominalisation (agent responsible social actors and in deletion), referential transfer reference to the representation of resulting in abstraction, negative actions and events) depersonalisation, anonymisation (metonymy)
Constructive strategies (i.e., linguistic acts that "create" a particular national identity; constitution of a "national 'we-group' "; referencing a wider national group by appealing (directly or indirectly) to national unity and solidarity)	– topoi of comparison: topos of similarity, *locus a minore* – topos of lovely, idyllic place (*locus amoenus*) – topos of comparison/topos of difference (including 'they are inferior compared to us')	– lexemes with levelling components

Assimilation, Inclusion and Continuation – presupposition/emphasis on intra-national sameness/similarity including the strategy of 'we are all in the same boat'	– topos of comparison/topos of difference (including 'they are inferior compared to us') – topos of the lovely, idyllic place (*locus amoenus*)	– referential assimilation (levelling down): spatial and personal reference (anthroponyms (personal names), toponyms (place names), personal pronoun 'we'), realisation as tropes (synecdoche, metonymy and personification)
Singularisation presupposition of/emphasis on national (positive) uniqueness	– contrasting topos of comparison: for example, *locus amoenus* vs. *locus terriblis*	– lexemes with semantic components, constructing singularity, individualization ('unique')
Dissimilation/Exclusion and Discontinuation		
– presupposition/emphasis on (state- internal and state-external) inter- national differences	– topos of comparison/topos of difference: presupposition of "we are superior compared to them"	– lexemes with semantic components constructing difference
– discontinuation/emphasis on a difference between then and now		– referential dissimilation and exclusion through personal and spatial reference: demonstrative and personal pronouns ('they', 'those', 'them'); synecdochical anthroponyms ('the German/s', 'the foreigner/s'); or personified toponyms often used metonymically ('Germany', Switzerland') – implicit and explicit comparisons
Strategies of Perpetuation used as an attempt to transform a well-established element of national identity into another		
Positive Self-Presentation/ Strategy of Calming Down		
Portrayal in Black and White (frequently in combination with positive self-presentation)	– topos of consequence: disaster topos or 'sugar-coated world' topos	– referential assimilation, *miranda* and positive attributions – vagueness
Strategies of Transformation Aim to transform a relatively well-established national identity and its components into another identity the contours of which the		

speaker has already conceptualised *(Possible) Positive Self-Presentation* (Including Presupposition of Inter-National Difference) – emphasis on Austria's (possible) model character for Eastern Europe and/or for the whole of Europe ("to set an example")	– Topos of comparison	– referential assimilation and dissimilation, antonyms, *miranda*/ positive attributions and *antimiranda*/ pejorative attributions, hyperboles – positively and negatively – connoted metaphors ('the hope that the winds from the East will blow and change the Western structures') – aphorisms/sayings – positively connotated personifications ('let's turn the future into our friend') – house metaphor ("European roof") – path or crossroads metaphors ('on the way to a larger Europe', 'Austria has come to a crossroads', 'to switch the points')
Strategies of Demontage (or dismantling) and destruction aim at dismantling or disparaging parts of an existing national identity construct but usually cannot provide any new model to replace the old one *Assimilation* – emphasis on inter-national sameness/similarity/ communality (also serving the purpose of negation of national uniqueness) *Dissimilation/Exclusion* – emphasis on intra-national differences		– lexical items with semantic components constructing levelling, assimilative attributions – assimilative reference – dissimilative reference and dissimilative and pejorative attributions labelling ('enemy', 'Tito's partisans') – implicit and explicit comparisons;

Apart from these macro discursive strategies, Reisigl & Wodak (2001:73) distinguish between five *discursive strategies* involved in *self and other presentation in discourse*, together with the systematic language (linguistic and rhetorical means and forms) used to realize them. Table 4 (below) shows the key discursive strategies together with their linguistic means and forms of

realisation, predominantly used by DHA scholars and that are systematically referred to in the analyses of political speeches and interview data in the present study, particularly when references to other social actors are made.

Table 4: *A selection of discursive strategies* (Source: Reisigl & Wodak, 2009:102; Wodak & Meyer, 2001:73)

Strategy	Objective	Devices
Referential or nomination	Discursive construction of social actors, objects/phenomena/ events and processes/ actions	• membership categorisation devices, deictics, anthroponyms, etc. • tropes such as metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches (*pars pro toto, totum pro pars*) • verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions, etc.
Predication	discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events/ processes and actions (more or less positively or negatively)	• stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits (e.g., in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctional clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups) • explicit predicates or predicative nouns/ adjectives/pronouns; • collocations • explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperboles, litotes, euphemisms) • allusions, evocations, presuppositions/implicatures, etc.
Argumentation	justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness	• topoi (or more content-related) • fallacies
Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation	positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance	• deictics • direct, indirect or free indirect speech • quotation marks, discourse markers/ particles • metaphors • animating prosody, etc.
Intensification, mitigation	Modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or deontic status of utterances	• diminutives or augmentatives • (modal) particles, tag questions, subjunctive, hesitations, vague expressions, etc. • Hyperboles, litotes • Indirect speech acts (e.g., question instead of assertion) • Verbs of saying, feeling, thinking, etc.

First, *referential* or *nomination strategies*, whereby social actors are constructed and represented in discourse are realised with the help of membership categorisation devices (by drawing on Membership Categorisation Analysis in the work of Harvey Sacks, 1992), such as in-/out-group categorisation. This is usually achieved by either of the three *rhetorical tropes*: *metonymy, synecdoche* and/or *metaphor*.

In discourse of representation, in order to keep someone/something in the semantic background, *metonymies* are called upon, as they allow the user to replace the actual name/ word by another that is closely associated with it (e.g., "the White House" for "US President") by drawing on the relationship between two adjacent conceptual fields. *Metonymies* involved in the linguistic representations of the social actors can be classified by its relation: *place for person* (e.g., The whole of Vienna celebrates); *country for persons* (e.g., All in all, Austria has never been so well off); *persons for country* (e.g., We are much too small to allow disharmony in vital areas of our country); *institution for (responsible) representatives of the institution* (Parliament rejected the motion) (Wodak et al., 2009:43).

Another trope, *synecdoche* is also resorted to in discourses involving generalising, stereotyping and essentialising of a group of persons. Synecdoche refers to transformation of the words originating from a similar semantic field and replacing them with words that are either semantically "wider" or "narrower" in meaning. Depending on the direction of representation, there are two types of synecdoches, "particularizing" and "generalizing" (Plett, 2001:92-94). Namely, p*articularizing synecdoche* is constituted by a representative relation, where a semantically narrower concept is drawn on to represent a semantically broader one (e.g., The Austrian [representing the Austrians as a nation] is a little bit slow – *pars pro toto* – the part stands for the whole). Another type, *generalizing synecdoche* is established by a semantically broader concept that represents a semantically narrower one (e.g., Austria is world

champion [this synecdoche is also a metonym] – *totum pro parte* – the whole stands for the part).

Another trope incorporated in DHA-informed analysis is *metaphor*. Because of its prominence in political texts and a range of discourses, *metaphor* has been recognised as an important rhetorical device since the times of Aristotle (1991). Within the scope of the present study, metaphor is regarded to be one of the "vehicle[-s] for understanding physical, social and inner worlds" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 159) by "mapping" conceptual structures from "source domain" onto the "target domain" (Lakoff, 1993: 208–209; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 156–160), whereby likening the more abstract concepts to familiar/recognisable experiences. Thus, in order to interpret the metaphorical meaning, one needs to draw on the semantic "mapping" from the "source" or the "target domain", which may also carry with them evaluative and emotive elements. For instance, as Lakoff (1996:154) suggests, the FAMILY metaphor is used in conceptualizations of "the nation" in U.S. political discourse. The "basic mapping", A NATION IS A FAMILY, provides a reference frame, which, encourages the construction of a nation by means of the characteristics normally ascribed to a "family", such as intimacy of relationships, characterised by love and care as well as physical proximity (i.e., living in one HOUSE – one country). Another common and widely studied conceptual metaphor, EUROPE IS A HOUSE (see Musolff, 2000; 2004), draws on the representation of Europe also in terms of a "construction" and a physical entity that has "a roof", "walls", "doors", etc., but also as one that bears socio-cognitive implications of living together with family, interacting with neighbours, in need of repair, fortress, and so forth.

Once the social actors (individuals or groups) are constructed via *referential strategy*, they are linguistically provided with *predications* (*predication strategy*), or evaluative ascription of positive/negative traits by means of implicit or explicit predicates that may be specific or vague. Therefore, as the outcome of this strategy, social actors, objects, events, actions as well as social

phenomena are appraised and labelled positively or negatively, approvingly or disapprovingly, with respect to quality, quantity, space, time or other evaluative categories. Predication strategy that draws on explicit *denotational* (literal meaning) and on implicit *connotational* (implied/ associative meaning) meanings is closely connected with referential strategy. Among other forms of reference, it is realised by a range of lexico-grammatical devices and rhetorical figures, such as: *adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctional clauses, infinitive clauses* and *participial clauses* or *groups, predicates* or *predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns*, *collocations, explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors* and *other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperboles, litotes* and *euphemisms)* and by more or less implicit *allusions, evocations* and *presuppositions/implications* (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 45).

Next, *argumentation strategies* are resorted to in order to justify or argue for/against the attribution of positive and/or negative characteristics to social actors, objects, etc., and are realized by means of a range of *topoi*. That is, *topoi* or *loci* is the concept that literally translates from Greek as "places" or "seat of arguments" (Valt, 2003: 318) and can be traced back to the classical argumentation theory of Aristotle and Cicero. DHA makes use of *topoi* in order to refer to an essential element within argumentation theory, which is usually either explicitly mentioned or inferred in discourse (Wodak et al., 2009:34). Topoi are normally made explicit as "conditional" (i.e., *if x, then y*) or "causal" paraphrases (i.e., *y, because x*) (see Reisigl & Wodak 2001:69–80) and resemble "conclusion rules", which connect an argument with the claim (Wodak, et al., 1999; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak 2009; Galasinska & Krzyzanowski, 2009). For the analysis of political speeches and the interview data, the following "List of topoi" in Table 5 (adapted from Wodak & Meyer, 2001:74-75) was regularly consulted. It offers "typical content related argument schemes" (ibid.) applicable to the analysis undertaken below.

Table 5 *List of topoi* adapted from Wodak & Meyer (2001:74-75) and Kwon, et al., (2009)

Topoi	Conditional structures
Usefulness, advantage • *Pro bono publico* – to the advantage of *all*; • *Pro bono nobis* – to the advantage of *us*; • *Pro bono eorum* – to the advantage of *them*;	If an action under a specific relevant point of view will be useful, then one should perform it;
Uselessness, disadvantage	If one can anticipate that the forecasted consequences of a decision will not occur, or if other political actions are more likely to lead to the declared aim, the decision has to be rejected; or If existing rulings do not help to reach the declared aims, they have to be changed;
Definition, name-interpretation	If an action, a thing or a person (group of persons) is named/ designated (as) X, the action, thing or person (group of persons) carries or should carry the qualities/traits/attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X;
Danger and threat	if a political action or decision bears specific dangerous, threatening consequences, one should not perform or do it; or if there are specific dangers and threats, one should do something against them;
Humanitarianism	if a political action or decision does or does not conform with human rights or humanitarian convictions and values, one should or should not perform or take it;
Justice (`equal rights for all')	if persons/actions/situations are equal in specific respects, they should be treated/dealt with in the same way;
Responsibility	because a state or a group of persons is responsible for the emergence of specific problems, it or they should act in order to find solutions to these problems;
Burdening, weighing down (a topos of consequence)	if a person, an institution or a country is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens;
Finances (topos of consequence)	if a specific situation or action costs too much money or causes a loss of revenue, one should

	perform actions which diminish the costs or help to avoid the loss;
Reality	because reality is as it is, a specific action/decision should be performed/made;
Numbers	if the numbers prove a specific topos, a specific action should be performed or not be carried out;
Law and right	if a law or an otherwise codified norm prescribes or forbids a specific politico-administrative action, the action has to be performed or omitted;
History	because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation (allegedly) comparable with the historical example referred to. A specific subtype of this argumentation scheme is the existing Ciceronian topos of *historia magistra vitae*, or `history teaching lessons' (see Wodak et al., 1999: 205-207);
Culture	because the culture of a specific group of people is as it is, specific problems arise in specific situations;
Abuse	if a right or an offer for help is abused, the right should be changed, or the help should be withdrawn, or measures against the abuse should be taken;

Wodak and her associates resort to this *List of topoi* particularly within the context of political discourse and identity construction (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; 2009; Wodak, 2009) but also when analysing the discourses of national/ European identity construction (Wodak et al., 1999; 2009; Wodak, 2009). Therefore, it appears also suitable to be used for reference in the course of the in-depth analysis in the present study.

Another discursive strategy of *perspectivation, framing of discourse representation*, allows the speaker to express their involvement and/or detachment as well as position their point of view, as they opt to report, narrate or quote other discourses within their own. In many respects, Reisigl & Wodak's (2001) *perspectivation strategy* draws on Goffman's "participation framework", and particularly on the concepts of "frames" and "footing"

(discussed on p.66 above) (Goffman 1981, Goffman 1999, Schiffrin 1994; Knoblauch 1994). "Frames" has to do with the broader knowledge about specific situations and what one is allowed to say and construct via certain linguistic forms (see for example Titscher et al., 2000:155). The concept of "footing" refers predominantly to those instances in talk when "[the] participant's alignment; or set; or stance, or posture, or projected self" is at stake (Goffman, 1981: 128), or the roles that a speaker may take on as s/he engages in discourse. Thus, for the present study, the concept of footing is particularly useful, as it can signal "speakers' discursive identities" (Davies & Harré, 1990), as the discourse unfolds and the speakers "position" themselves and/ or others in certain ways (active, passive, belonging to one community/ distancing themselves from another, etc.).

Footing and framing (that are subsumed under *perspectivation strategy*) are closely linked with speakers' *involvement* in discourse, indicative of the speaker's attitudinal stance (see Tannen, 1989) and reflecting their inner states, or conversely, speaker's discursive means for constructing "distance"/ *detachment* (see Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). Generic and subjective categories of *sameness* and *difference*, *detachment* and *affiliation, distance* and *proximity* (De Celia et al., 1999) are considered to be among the key markers of identity in discourse. Thus, one such marker is considered to be *deixis*, which is indexical (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) and heavily relies on the context it is embedded in, as it may be indicative of identity construction by discursively positioning the speaker in relation to others. Deixis is likely to be represented by a single or a combination of the following lexical units and syntactic devices:

- *Personal reference* (anthroponymic generic terms, personal pronouns, quantifiers);
- *Spatial reference* (toponyms/ geonyms, adverbs of place, spatial reference through persons, by means of prepositional phrases such as 'with us', 'with them');
- *Temporal reference* (temporal prepositions, adverbs of time, temporal conjunctions, temporal references by means of nouns, semi-prefixes with temporal meaning.

(*Source*: Wodak et al., 2009:35)

The deictic choices that the speaker makes allows them to position their point of view and express their involvement and/ or distance towards others.

Perspectivation strategy is closely linked with *intensification* and *mitigation strategies*, as in oral discourse *involvement* is realised with the help of *intensification strategy*, by means of paralinguistic and prosodic features (tone, tempo, pitch, etc.) but also by means of rhetorical devices, such as repetition (e.g., repetition of phonemes, morphemes, words, collocations, etc.) as well as some lexico-grammatical means, including *intensity markers*, *emphasising particles* ('really', 'very', 'absolutely', 'only'), *amplifying particles* ('very', 'too', 'absolutely'), *emphasising* and *verb phrases, adjectives* and *adverbs* suggestive of the speakers' emotions (Resigl & Wodak, 2001:83).

Constructing *detachment/ distancing* from the claim and/or modifying the epistemic stance of the proposition by toning it down is generally associated with *mitigation strategies* and willingness to conceal something (e.g., discriminatory remarks, negative stereotyping, etc.) as a face saving act or withdrawing the responsibility for the claim. The use of *mitigation strategies* in identity construction is usually captured via *mood* and *modality* markers, via *attitudinal vocabulary* and *collocation* use as well as *presupposition* and *implicature*, which rely on the interlocutor's/ audience's co-construction / deduction of "implied" meaning (see detailed table in Reisigl & Wodak, 2001:99). For identification and categorisation of *mitigation strategies* Reisigl & Wodak (ibid.) propose three types of *mitigation*:

- *Macro mitigation* - mitigation "in parenthesis" (implicit/ indirect), realised by a range of linguistic forms indicating various degrees of reservation (e.g., "addressee-oriented reservation" – for example: 'If you don't mind…');
- *Indirect micro mitigation* – mitigation relying on the illocutionary force of the utterance of varying strength (e.g,. using questions in place of assertions/directives – for example: 'Shouldn't we go further ?');
- *Direct micro mitigations* - vague expressions, tag questions, subjunctives, particles and adverbs (e.g, 'fairly', 'quite', 'pretty', 'somewhat', 'perhaps', etc.)

Thus, a *mitigation strategy* may appear either more explicitly in discourse, or be more suggestive and covert. Either way, it is typically used in a strategic attempt to tone down the illocutionary force of the utterance.

This brief outline of discursive strategies and their rhetorical and lexico-grammatical means of realisation focused only on those elements of the DHA analytical framework that are likely to be involved in the identity construction process and have been used in earlier studies of national identity construction (De Celia et al., 1999; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; 2009) and discourses of discrimination (positive self and negative other representation) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). In what follows, a reflection on DHA analytical framework, particularly regarding its validity will be discussed.

4.5.3 Reflections on the analytical framework

It is necessary to acknowledge that a degree of subjectivity may be a potential limitation of the analytical framework adopted in the present study. This is particularly due to the fact that approaches to CDA heavily rely on the hermeneutic/ interpretative work of the analyst, which may to an extent be biased and has been criticised for that by some scholars (Widdowson 1995, Breeze 2011). However, to ensure greater validity, unlike some other approaches to CDA, DHA draws on *triangulation* of theory and data, "[…] which is appropriate whatever one's theoretical orientation or use of quantitative or qualitative data" (Silverman, 1993: 156). Thus, the present study draws on *methodical* and *theoretical triangulation*, based on Cicourel's (1992) concept of *context* where the *macro*, "broader context" (e.g., historical, political, institutional, organisational, etc.) is taken into consideration as well as *micro*, "local context" (e.g., related to a particular time, place and participants and the specific language used) (cf. Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Weiss, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This ensures analyst's continuous switching between different levels of *context* (*macro* - *micro*) and different *genres* (empirical interviews, online institutional texts and political speeches) as well as looking at the data from a variety of theories and perspectives before drawing any conclusions. Therefore, such an approach to evaluating the findings, allows for reducing the risk of researcher's bias.

Nevertheless, discourse analysis cannot grant absolute "objectivity", for each "technology of research" needs to be considered as potentially embedding the beliefs and ideologies of the researcher and therefore predisposing the analyst towards their existing preconceptions (Wodak & Meyer, 2009: 31). This has been addressed by attempting an accurate and systematic analysis, self-reflection while also mainting distance from the data being investigated. Nonetheless, a post-structuralist stance is assumed here in believing that "the *right* interpretation does not exist" (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999), as any interpretation is shaped by speakers' and hearers' background knowledge and therefore is subjective. Subsequently, as CDA does not "pretend to be able to assume an objective, socially neutral analytical stance" (Wodak et al. 2009: 8), the present study cannot claim that its findings are generalizable nor entirely free from researcher's bias.

Summary

The chapter has discussed the methodology adopted in this study. Details have been provided on the preparation work that took place, the steps of data collection and the data type (political speeches, online institutional texts and individual interviews), as well as providing the rationale for the interview questions that were asked. Some background information about the interview participants including socio-demographic details was provided. Also, the context (background information) that the political speeches of the EU Commissioner were embedded in, as well as the choice of online institutional texts and the selection procedure were outlined. The DHA analytical framework used in this study was also extensively discussed, followed by some reflections on the limitations of adopting DHA as an analytical framework. The next two chapters will draw on the theoretical and analytical tools outlined in the preceding chapters in order to analyse the political speeches, the informative institutional texts and interviews with Erasmus students.

Chapter 5: Institutional Discourses: Analyses and Findings

In order to examine the representations of Erasmus students' and their identity construction in "official" EU discourses, the speeches of the former EU Commissioner for Education (A. Vassiliou) and the informative texts publicly available on the website of the State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia (www.viaa.gov.lv) will be analysed in this chapter. One of the responsibilities of the EU Commissioner for Education is to represent the Erasmus programme in public, thereby to liaise between the European Parliament and the European society, to promote and encourage student mobility. The selected official speeches offer insight into the *top-down* construction of *Erasmus student identities* in a *public* setting. The in-depth analysis presented in this chapter draws on the selection of five extracts from three official speeches by Vassiliou produced between 2010-2012; the same time period when the research interviews with Erasmus students in Latvia were recorded and the same time period as online institutional texts were published by the Latvian State Education Development Agency. The broader political, economic and social contexts that the speeches and the online institutional texts were embedded in (discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 above) are likely to have had an impact on the content of these speeches and texts and ought to be borne in mind throughout the *thematic* and *linguistic* analyses that follow.

The discussion begins by looking briefly at each extract from the speeches and identifying the most prominent *thematic* and *linguistic* features as befits the 'first pass' analysis of the data. Two themes were particularly relevant to the focus of this study:

- First, it appears that the theme of the *Erasmus programme* was prominent, focusing on its indebtedness to the past scholarly traditions of mobility in Europe, emphasising the importance of the programme's positive impact and arguing for its continuity;

- Secondly, Erasmus students, as direct beneficiaries of European collaboration, are constructed as gaining a range of essential skills and abilities through close encounters with other European youths. The experience of study abroad changes their perceptions of self and the world, transforming through their agency the European society at large.

Having identified the prominent themes in each extract, the analysis moves on to look at the different *discursive strategies* together with the *linguistic means of realisation* emerging in these extracts, while identifying and interpreting their rhetorical impact against the micro and macro contexts.

5.1 Student mobility from medieval times to present day

On 4 October, 2010 Commissioner Vassiliou presented the new "Youth on the Move" initiative at the EU Youth Conference in Leuven, the medieval university town in Belgium. The Commissioner emphasised the key role of education and training in modern Europe. "*We want all young people to have fair and equal access to education and employment. We also want to give every young person the opportunity to be an active citizen in their community*". The EU Youth Conference is a regular presidency youth policy event that brought together over 250 young Europeans and policy makers from the EU Member States. This debate formed a part of the ongoing structured dialogue with young people at national and EU levels.

The following extract is a fragment from Commissioner Vassiliou's speech from the Conference. There are two key points that she strategically emphasises. First, she argues for the continuation of the ERASMUS scheme by merging and aligning past scholar experiences with present scholars as well as making references to Medieval scholars' comparatively superior status (e.g. contributing to the running of the Universities of that time). Second, through this account of consistency and longevity, the 'core value' of democracy is employed to construct EU identity, however one chooses to interpret "Europe" (i.e., as an institution, a body of people, etc.).

Speech 1. Extract 1.

A. Vassiliou. Speech at *EU Youth Conference*. http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101004_en.htm (last accessed on 12/12/14) Leuven, Belgium. 4 October, 2010

> Just as in modern times, medieval universities were home to many foreign students. They travelled from one university to the other; they shared knowledge; they broadened each other's perspectives; and they asked awkward questions that changed our understanding of the world! One such travelling scholar who stayed here [in Leuven] was Erasmus of Rotterdam. And as I am sure you know, Erasmus lives on in our well-known exchange programme for students. Medieval academics were also very active in decisions about university life. They were organised in so-called "nations". They elected representatives who in turn elected the rector of the university. So we can really say that the medieval scholars sparked democratic participation, including that of young people, one of Europe's core values.

In this extract, Vassiliou establishes a connection between the past and the present-day scholarly traditions of student mobility in Europe across the span of several centuries. By merging and aligning the experiences of medieval travelling scholars and the modern-day Erasmus students, a similar status is bestowed on the latter, despite the comparatively superior role of medieval students, who were empowered to take decisions concerning the running of the university. Vassiliou also draws attention to the impact that travelling scholars of the past have had on the society at large by introducing "democracy", which to-date remains one of the "core values" of Europe (often mentioned on the official European Union website[43]).

Pointing to the scale of the legacy left behind by the medieval scholars, Vassiliou strategically argues for the continuation of the Erasmus programme, resorting to the *topos of history***,** (see Wodak & Meyer, 2001:76). The latter is 'borrowed' from the Ciceronian topos of "historia magistra vitae", "history teaches lessons" (see Wodak et al., 1999: 150), claiming that as historically student mobility has shown a positive, long lasting, advantageous and viable impact on individuals and society at large, it (in the form of Erasmus programme) should continue to be performed/ practised.

The Commissioner operationalises *the topos of history* in relation to student mobility by identifying its indebtedness to the past. The adverb "just as" in "just as in modern times, medieval universities were home to many foreign students" emphasises the continuation of the role of universities as open to international students over time (the past, i.e. "medieval" times and the present, "modern times"). The universities of the past and the present are constructed

[43] https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en (accessed on 14/09/2017)

as open, welcoming places, signalled by the emotive metaphor of "home", implying foreign students' close, familial relations with the host university as well as their belonging and affiliation with it. This is justified by reference to the allegedly high number of exchange students - emphasis achieved by the determiner "many" (an *intensification strategy*) - implying that throughout the history of student mobility, foreign students have become an integral part of university life.

Another concrete reference bringing the past of student mobility closer to the present day is the embodied reference to Erasmus of Rotterdam and his past experience as a 'mobile' scholar visiting the Belgian town of Leuven, (where Vassiliou's speech is being delivered). This famous Medieval scholar, a Dutch humanist and philosopher Erasmus Desiderius (1465-1536), lived and worked in different parts of Europe, "in quest of the knowledge, experience and insights which only such contacts with other countries could bring"[44] (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion about Erasmus of Rotterdam and the link with the present-day student mobility programme). His name as we know forms the acronym for the present-day European student mobility programme, ERASMUS (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students). Vassiliou makes much of his distinctive status, exemplifying him as 'one such travelling scholar' in the past. We therefore witness a shift in *perspectivation strategy* from the past temporal frame of student mobility, signalled by the use of past tense ("stayed"/ "was") into the present through the use of spatial deictic "here", to reference the immediate context of speaking (in Leuven). This link between the present and past of student mobility allows Vassiliou's addressees to better visualise and identify with the long-standing tradition of student mobility, arguing for its preservation via ERASMUS. At the same time, the Commissioner pertinently contextualises it for her addressees in a physical sense since they are similarly located in the space that Erasmus of Rotterdam once occupied. This reference also

[44] http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/history_en.htm (accessed 05.12.2012).

brings with it a connotation – Erasmus as a widely recognised great scholar – the status that is vicariously assumed by the students themselves.

A diachronic link between the past and the present of student mobility is also established by explicit denotation (a *predication strategy*) of continuity in "As I'm sure you know, Erasmus lives on in our well-known exchange programme". Vassiliou points to the recognition of past practices of student mobility today by endorsing it with the emphatic discourse marker, "as I'm sure you know", directly addressing today's Europeans and their familiarity with the connotational and denotational meanings of "Erasmus". Thus, here "Erasmus" is used metaphorically to represent the Medieval scholar's legacy transformed into a modern-day European phenomenon, supporting and promoting the type of educational mobility that Erasmus of Rotterdam used to be a part of. Erasmus' legacy is defined via reference to the vitality and continued impact of the programme.

Vassiliou asserts: "They travelled from one university to the other; they shared knowledge; they broadened each other's perspectives; and they asked awkward questions that changed our understanding of the world!" Vassiliou makes the travelling scholars of the past appear more real and immediate by asserting their "critical experience" and suggesting cognitive change - "they asked awkward questions". At the same time she is constructing resemblances between the experiences of modern-day and Medieval travelling scholars. It is implied here that despite the different historical periods, current students also share these positive experiences and traits. They too ask awkward questions and entertain broad experiences, suggesting a change of outlook from a narrower nationally constrained filter to the "European" (Benhold, 2005) one, which is broader in scope. Travelling scholars were becoming more critical of their own knowledge and understanding by not taking anything for granted, something that Block (2002:4) terms as "a critical experience". That is, the change in

socio-cultural and linguistic settings has an impact on mobile students' reflexivity and critical thinking, encouraging them to question the notions/concepts that appeared certain before.

The transformations resulting from student mobility constructed here imply both *personal* (individual) and *social* changes. The *personal* changes are more immediate and take place on the level of each student, resulting from contact with different "others" of the same/similar status. The latter is marked by a *referential strategy* through the reciprocal pronouns "each other". The *social* changes resulting from student mobility have a longer-lasting transformative effect, not only on mobile students but also on humanity at large; it "changed our understanding of the world". The verb "changed" and the nominalisation "understanding" both point to the processual nature of transformation resulting from student mobility, acknowledging the change in social cognition that has taken place over time. The continuity between two different historical periods is established through the affective link with the present, marked by the switch to inclusive personal pronoun "our", alluding to present-day Europeans.

To illustrate the *social* changes initiated by Medieval scholars, Vassiliou draws attention to "nations", a medieval equivalent of modern day "fraternities", who used to play an active role in electing representatives. These in turn chose the rector, giving the students a role in running of the university. The democratic principles, (which she argues are still important in today's Europe), were initially applied in the running of the universities on the basis of students' "democratic participation" in the decision-making process. She notes that "Medieval academics were *also* very active in decisions about university life". However, "also" is used to expand on other positive qualities that were ascribed to Medieval academics earlier in the speech (such as critical thinking, sharing knowledge). Moreover, the reference to Medieval scholars as "very active" intensifies the illocutionary force (an *intensification strategy*), asserting their contribution to shaping the universities of that time and also, suggesting that Medieval students

were of a different "calibre" to modern-day Erasmus students, who do not have such agency and /or involvement in the running of today's universities.

5.2. Erasmus: the Triumph of the EU

The following extract is taken from Vassiliou's speech delivered in Antwerp on 5th of October 2010 at *Youth on the Move* conference. This conference was organised by the Flemish Ministry of Education and attended by around 300 delegates. The main purpose of the conference was to discuss the European Union's new (at the time) flagship initiative *Youth on the Move*, which was designed to increase the educational mobility of young people.

Among the conference guests apart from A. Vassiliou, there were a number of politicians and representatives of European organisations promoting educational mobility: the Flemish Education Minister; a number of Directors from the European Commission; the Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation; representatives of DAAD (The German Academic Exchange Service, or DAAD, the largest German support organisation in the field of international academic co-operation) as well as the Director of ACA (Brussels-based Academic Cooperation Association).

Speech 2. Extract 1.

A. Vassiliou. Speech at *Youth On The Move* Conference. http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101005_en.htm (last accessed on 12/12/14) Antwerp, Belgium. 5 October, 2010

> […]But because we are at the start of the academic year; the start of a new chapter for millions of our young people. All over Europe, young people have been packing their bags and heading off to university. And around 200.000 of them are travelling with a European flag pinned to their backpacks, so to speak…. This is our Erasmus generation of 2010! By now, after two decades of continuing success, we all know of Erasmus students in our families or our communities – and it makes me very happy that Erasmus has given the European Union a human face. […] It [student mobility] should not be only for the elite, but should be made accessible to all young people, especially those from more disadvantaged groups. […] While they [mobile students] may come from different backgrounds, and go abroad for different reasons, the benefits are still the same.

In this extract Vassiliou showcases the triumph of EU collaboration in the sphere of European education. Though not alluded to overtly by her, 2010 (as mentioned above) was a challenging

time across Europe. This was also the time when due to significant budget cuts in education, the future of the Erasmus programme was at stake. Even though the Erasmus programme was widely recognised as successful, the 2009-2013 Erasmus programme (i.e., Erasmus Mundus – discussed in Chapter 2 above) received a fair amount of criticism, as it did not reach all of its targets (see Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013:9). Financial issues and the programme's accessibility particularly for students from socially disadvantaged groups were still regarded as the key challenges that needed to be addressed in the future (Heger, 2013:68). This historical background lends greater poignancy to the rhetoric of Vassiliou in promoting the continued success of the Erasmus programme and in her promotion of it as an equitable and shared endeavour for all EU citizens.

In the following analysis we consider how this is achieved via reference to Erasmus students, the role of the programme in promoting the EU project (and how she mitigates the criticisms levelled against it), and the stance she takes towards the audience itself.

Vassiliou appears at pains throughout this extract to build an argument to justify the positive impact of the Erasmus programme by asserting shared recognition of its success, emphasising its role as a "joint" undertaking, making explicit linguistic references to support her claim. For instance, the speaker-inclusive pronoun "we", together with the indefinite pronoun "all" in "we all know", are used emphatically to justify Vassiliou's claim. The temporal marker "after two decades" backs up this conjecture by reference to the longevity of its "continuing success", (with the positive evaluation marked by "success").

Erasmus programme appears as the trademark of fruitful European cooperation in education across the member states, making Europe appear more tangible and recognisable. Reference to the sizable community of Erasmus beneficiaries is expressed as pervasive among mobile European youths, "*All over Europe*, young people have been packing their bags and heading off to universities…", and a manifest outcome of European collaborative effort,

marked by present perfect progressive, linking the impact of student mobility with the present. The argument is also backed up by concrete figures, (*the topos of numbers)* "200.000 […] are travelling with a European flag pinned to their backpacks", where the tremendous size of the cohort is used to justify the significance of the programme for the young people of university age. Erasmus students are represented as a noticeable group of active mobile travellers crossing national and geographic borders. The national flags in Vassiliou's speech are replaced by the single European flag on Erasmus students' backpacks, representing a community beyond national identifications, a community carrying a "European flag" on their backs, self-identifying with Europe and brandishing European identity for all to see.

This community of young mobile Europeans is intertextually referred to as the "Erasmus generation", a popular term, which has been used by contemporary journalists, social scientists and political actors (see e.g. Picht 2004; DAAD 2007; Cappè 2010; Wilson 2011). In Vassiliou's speech, the reference to "Erasmus generation" in "This is our Erasmus generation of 2010!" is used to offer a specific example of successful cooperation between the member states by setting them apart from previous generations. "2010 Erasmus generation" presupposes the distinct status and opportunities that are available to young people in today's Europe that were not available to previous generations of students. Vassiliou is constructing the European exchange students in biological/ evolutionary terms by naturalising them in her discourse, thereby showing the immediacy and belonging of Erasmus students' in European society. Both spatial deictic "this", and the temporal marker,"2010" (with reference to the time of speaking), not only establish the relation between the two groups, ("Erasmus students" and "Europeans") in the context of the present-day but also single out the Erasmus generation, (united by similar age and the common experience of mobility), making "Erasmus" a shared European phenomenon.

As the extract develops, Vassiliou moves from the statement of indirect prepositional meaning to rhetorically drawing the listener into her prose, thereby attempting to establish alignment with the audience through the assertion of shared investment, ownership and knowledge. No longer are Erasmus students merely travelling students but they are "our Erasmus generation", they are from "our communities", "our families". At the same time, Vassiliou recognises that this goes hand in hand with the change in perception of the European Union and as such, "Erasmus has given the European Union a human face" capturing the crucial attainment of the Erasmus programme. The use of personification here emphasises the fact that through the Erasmus programme, the EU has become more real, recognisable and therefore closer and more comprehensible to its citizens. Vassiliou shifts her *perspectivation* from the global to the local, promoting an attitudinal and perceptive change towards *European identities*, whereby Europeans become a *closely-knit family-like inclusive community*.

Having established its local significance, Vassiliou moves on to address the criticism levelled at the programme, that it is still not "a programme for everyone" (Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013:10), as she rejects any call for exclusivity and points out some of its new priorities, placing emphasis on the programme's openness to students from a range of social-economic backgrounds. The argumentation in favour of the EU as a just and democratic institution supporting equal and fair treatment of all of its citizens draws on the intertextual allusion to the objectives outlined in the "Erasmus Mundus Programme Guide 2009-2013" (11/2013 :50), which aims at "greater social cohesion" and the promotion of " equal opportunities for all", particularly for young people with fewer/limited opportunities.

Her argument is constructed on the basis of *a topos of justice*, drawing on the principle of "equal rights for all" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001:73). It is suggested here that irrespective of student background, all ought to be treated the same (allegedly by Erasmus programme officials issuing the grants) by being given equal access to the Erasmus student mobility programme. In

fact, noting that Erasmus "should not be only for the elite", but "should be made accessible to all young people", Vassiliou depersonalises her prose to indirectly address the criticism of Erasmus and to assert its aims from a seemingly impartial/ neutral stance, asserted with the help of depersonalised pronoun "it". At the same time a greater assertive impact is achieved through the organisation of her speech, starting with obligatory modal verb "should" used within the negative frame ("shouldn't") before establishing a positive one ("should"). This construction of the argument makes the EU appear as a fair and just institution in its equitable treatment of all young people.

The use of *referential* and *predication strategies* allow Vassiliou to construct and challenge a 'perceived' representation of Erasmus students based on their social status, with those labelled as "more disadvantaged" belonging to the "out-group" in contrast to the "elite" in-group, representing the majority of Erasmus students. Contrasting categories of perceived differences further intensify the inter-group division on the basis of their socio-economic status, "different background" and motivation, "different reasons for going abroad". However, the potential outcomes of student mobility draw both groups together, making them alike through the *topos of justice* and *equality* in "while […] the benefits are still the same". Intensification of the truthfulness of the claim is reinforced by adversative "while", which is used to support Vassiliou's final argument, acknowledging the differences amongst the groups of students, while at the same time referring to the importance of equity and emphasizing that the benefits of student mobility should be experienced by all.

5.3 Benefits of European student mobility

The next extract forms a part of Speech 2 (analysed above), but was split for ease of analysis and discussion into two parts and labelled as Speech 2, Extract 2. The title of this

section illustrates the thematic pattern selected for the purposes of the analysis and does not stand for the title of Vassiliou's speech.

Speech 2. Extract 2.

A. Vassiliou. Speech at *Youth On The Move* Conference. http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101005_en.htm (last accessed on 12/12/14) Antwerp, Belgium. 5 October, 2010

> European mobility programmes are all built on the conviction that engaging with people and cultures from other countries is intrinsically valuable. By spending time immersed in a learning environment abroad, our young people gain valuable knowledge and understanding of other cultures and ways of doing things. They broaden their perspectives, become more adaptable, more self-reliant, and develop their communication and language skills. The experience of living and learning in another European country is an immensely valuable foundation stone for a career in our increasingly global European economy. […] And as one of our students said, "I realised that the experience made a whole new person of me; and I would never look at the world and Europe, my home, as I did before."

This extract's key argumentation concerns the benefit of student mobility for the challenges of today's labour market. The argument is embedded in the context of the global economic decline (as mentioned above), which has an impact on youth unemployment[45]. It appears that during the time, graduates did not possess the skillsets that employers required from them, making it challenging for candidates to find work. It has been reported by the European Commission's Directorates General (DG) for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion[46] that despite high unemployment, two million job vacancies remained unfilled in Europe during that period. Vassiliou's speech addresses bridging this gap between the higher education and the demands of the labour market, arguing that the sought-after knowledge and skills gained from Erasmus experience could offer young Europeans better chances of finding employment.

The Commissioner's key argument with regard to the validity of the Erasmus exchange programme builds on the *topos of advantage/ usefulness*, '*pro bono publico'* (i.e., to the advantage of all) (see Wodak, 2001:73). That is, if the study abroad experience in view of the

[45] www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9023_en.pdf *(accessed on 05/02/2015) Skill mismatch in Europe*

[46] European Commission's DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion on *Youth employment* http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036 (accessed on 23/05/2015)

majority of the Commissioners, alluded to by interdiscursive reference to "conviction", is believed to benefit young Europeans, they (young Europeans) should take part in such a programme, as it will be advantageous for their future careers. Listing the beneficial outcomes of the Erasmus programme for European youths and society at large, Vassiliou shifts her discursive frame (via the use of *perspectivation strategy*) from inclusive and involved reference, i.e. "*our* young people" to indefinite pronoun, "other", by reference to a new setting and moving on to the detached vague second person plural pronoun "they" and its derivatives to reference Erasmus students, as she asserts a distant, seemingly more neutral tone towards her claim. Having drawn the audience into her argument by directly involving/addressing them with her choice of possessive pronoun "our", she then assumes some distance towards her claim, marked by pronominal shift to vague pronoun "they", making her argument appear more factual, trustworthy and generalisable.

Vassiliou goes on to argue that the very unique social and cultural setting of study abroad provides an exceptional learning environment for mobile students, "engaging with people and cultures from other countries is intrinsically valuable". The repetition of "culture" in the first part of the extract draws attention to the importance of its role in intercultural encounters, which has also been recognised elsewhere as an indispensable part of student mobility (cf. Dervin, 2006; 2008). Here, "culture" appears as a cognitive category alluded to by nominalisation "knowledge and understanding", associated with observable behaviour of others that is possible to capture and learn/ internalise through direct exposure to difference/ otherness.

It is the exposure to difference and otherness that leads to rich socio-cognitive learning, resulting in greater intellectual flexibility, adaptability and self-reliance in Erasmus students. The reference to Erasmus students as becoming "more self-reliant" has to do with the entire Erasmus experience; having been withdrawn from their safe familial environment, mobile

students become more responsible for their actions and decisions, becoming "more adaptable", more flexible, in order to accommodate to the demands of different contexts and new social actors. Moreover, socio-cognitive changes, as an outcome of study abroad, are signalled and reinforced by means of the repetitive realisation of the comparative adverb "more" employed to modify positive adjectives describing the personal characteristics of mobile students. These are used in combination, with verbs of transformative material process, (i.e. "broaden" and "become"), indicating change with regard to the scope of perception among exchange students. These are assumed to be the qualities that are advantageous in a postmodern world, characterised by constant change and instability (Bauman, 2000), where it is expected that individuals will be able to adapt in order to meet the demands of the fluid contexts they enter and the variety of individuals that they meet.

Intellectual flexibility, adaptability and self-reliance are all argued to be beneficial to Erasmus students and contribute to their employment prospects. However, an emphasis on the benefits of the programme for finding employment recurs throughout this extract, notably by the repetition of positive evaluative adjectives (e.g. "valuable"), as well as metaphorical cross-domain mapping to refer to the progress and improvement resulting from Erasmus experience. The programme is described via the invocation of the conceptual metaphor of BUILDING with its inherent entailment of 'foundation' – its conception is noted to be 'built on the conviction that engaging with people and cultures from other countries is intrinsically valuable' whilst its enactment later on in the speech provides "the foundation stone for [student] career[s]". Erasmus is credited with providing the students with the necessary transferrable knowledge and skills for enhanced employability. The importance of this claim is intensified through the use of the expressive adverbials "immensely" and "increasingly", expressing Vassiliou's conviction that by ensuring the prerequisite skills for finding employment, European mobility is a meaningful goal-oriented endeavour.

In order to add weight to the *topos of advantage/usefulness* of the Erasmus experience and convey "pathos", Vassiliou resorts to *recontextualisation* (Wodak, 2009:39) through direct reporting of the actual words of one former Erasmus student. The quoted extract supports her argument with respect to the *transformative* nature of the Erasmus exchange experience as "the experience made a whole new person of me" and "I would never look at the world and Europe, my home as I did before". Here, the speaker points out two types of interconnected change resulting from his/her student mobility experience: a change in the *perception of self* and a change in the *perspectivation of the world and Europe* by using the metaphor of SIGHT and the transformative verb "made", embedded in the metaphor-sense verb "look".

The significance of transformation as the result of mobility is amplified here by reference to a "whole new person", suggesting that they were not "whole" or complete, possibly even 'lacking', prior to the exchange. The narrative of personal change, draws on "binary oppositions" (Wodak, 1996:7) between the categories of quality, "whole" vs. "not whole", the "old self" vs. the "new self", framed by the temporal references to the *self* "before" and "after" the exchange, with the agentive role of the Erasmus experience channelling the change. The subjective stance and reflexivity are marked through the choice of the first person personal pronoun "I", combined with the verb of mental process, "realised".

Another reputed transformation resulting from the Erasmus experience is the change of positioning of the student's *self* towards Europe and the rest of the world. The change in speaker (alleged student's "voice") perspectivation is signalled by temporal reference "before", as opposed to "now", the moment of speaking, implying that the speaker's perception of Europe and the world have changed following their experience. This shift in *perspectivation strategy* is referenced by a number of linguistic markers: an evaluative clause, indexing the speaker's appraisal through their perceptive response to change, implied by the verb of mental process "look". The emotionally coloured metaphor of "home", referencing the national or

local/familial context represents a type of listing, which appears as a reduction in community size from the world (*macro*) through to Europe (*meso*) and then "home" (*micro*) in "I would never look at the world and Europe, my home, as I did before", thereby establishing a shifting belonging, where "home", as the point of reference shifts from the global to the local. The use of auxiliary verb "would" in conjunction with "never" affords an alternative hypothetical scenario, presupposing the speaker did not embark on student mobility and adds emphasis to the beneficial nature of Erasmus student mobility. Such a scenario is immediately rejected by a disclaimer ("I would never…") in which the speaker asserts that an alternative decision, presumably that of immobility, as opposed to student mobility, would not have rendered an equally beneficial and positive outcome. Nevertheless, this claim remains vague and open-ended (marked by the ellipsis at the end of the utterance), leaving out the specificity of the change or the more detailed perceptions of the speaker, as it is used primarily to illustrate and justify Vassiliou's earlier claim about the beneficial nature of Erasmus student mobility.

5.4. *En route* to United Europe with Erasmus student mobility

Year 2012 marked '25th Erasmus anniversary', which was celebrated at a number of specially organised events throughout Europe, under the slogan "Erasmus: changing lives, opening minds for 25 years". The extract selected here for further analysis was presented by the Commissioner Vassiliou in Copenhagen, at a press conference celebrating Erasmus 25 years of achievement and setting out goals for the future of the programme. The Commissioner was joined by 66 "Erasmus Ambassadors" from the 33 EU member states participating in the Erasmus scheme as well as Danish Ministers and members of the Danish Royal family (for more details on the speech see Table 1 in Chapter 4 above).

In her speech Vassiliou issues praise and explicitly emphasises the success of the Erasmus scheme by pointing to significant socio-economic and political changes that have

taken place in Europe over the past 25 years. With this contextual background in mind, Vassiliou also acknowledges the role of the Erasmus programme and Erasmus students, 'the ambassadors of change' in establishing international affiliations, thereby transforming Europe.

Speech 3. Extract 1.

A. Vassilious. Speech *Learning mobility can help to fight the crisis* at the Conference on the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-345_en.htm (accessed on 11/02/2015) Copenhagen, Denmark. 9 May, 2012

> But what makes Erasmus special is more than its longevity. It is truly a remarkable success story of the European Union. By making student mobility a reality, no other EU programme has been as effective in uniting young Europeans across nations. Over the years, it has become a tangible symbol of the impact and the added-value of European programmes. Let's take a moment to consider Europe in 1987, when the Erasmus programme was launched. Our continent was still divided into two political blocs. It was not so easy for people to work or study abroad, even within the EU. We had no common currency, and no common market. At the same time, though, it was an optimistic and forward-looking time, a new beginning for the European project, under the impulse of several ambitious integration initiatives. The Erasmus programme was set up as a response to the challenges of those times. The free flow of goods would be complemented by the free flow of knowledge. The common economic space would be strengthened by a new generation of Europe-minded, educated young people. Erasmus students were pioneers in a Europe where it was still relatively unusual to study abroad. Each Erasmus exchange played a small but important role in bringing European states and peoples closer together.

This speech by Vassiliou explicitly marks the 25th anniversary of Erasmus, asserting the success of the EU funded programme and its viability for the future. As the title, "Learning mobility can help to fight the crisis", suggests, the speech is contemporaneous with the economic recession and is argued to offer a solution. It appears that its purpose is to demonstrate the continued effectiveness of the programme directly and to indirectly address and potentially 'combat' the economic downturn, implied by the metaphor of WAR, "fight".

Heres, Vassiliou emphasises the success of the Erasmus programme, which she claims is indebted to the European Union, for bringing young educated Europeans closer together and changing their perception of themselves as well as their growing awareness of affiliation with Europe. This claim for the transformative role of the Erasmus programme is supported by the *topos of advantage/usefulness* once again (similar to Speech 2 Extract 2 above). The Commissioner justifies this by emphasising the advantages that the programme has for

"Europe". This is referenced metonymically expanding the scope of the *topos of advantage/ usefulness* to *pro bono publico*, "to the advantage of all" (Wodak, 2001:74).

The Erasmus programme is constructed as successful in having established itself firmly in today's changing world. With the help and support from the European Union, the programme made the idea of bringing young Europeans together a reality by providing them with an opportunity to meet each other and form relationships. In this way, Erasmus has initiated a transformative process not only on the level of individuals, but it has also affected the European society at large by gradually changing its perceptions of "European neighbours" from distant and disconnected entities to inclusive societies. This is the major transformation, which has taken place over 25 years since the launch of Erasmus. The part of the extract describing Erasmus' success is abundant in emphatic vivid language realised by an *intensification strategy*, which increases the illocutionary force of the utterances.

Vassiliou begins her speech by involving her audience with an embedded rhetorical question "[…] what makes Erasmus special?" assuming therefore that Erasmus is "special" and different when compared to other programmes. Emphasis (relating to *intensification strategy*) is achieved here by offering a response as a part of the same clause, "is more than its longevity". This, suggests that the programme's success has been established and tested by time, as emphasised by the temporal markers of "longevity" and "over the years", though use of the comparative "more than" in reference to the programme's longevity suggests that there are also other characteristics that make it stand out from other existing programmes. The Erasmus programme is even attributed superior status in comparison with other educational programmes through open negation in "no other EU programme has been as effective in uniting young Europeans across nations".

The justification of Erasmus's success is also illustrated by reference (the use of a *predication strategy*) to its achievements, "Over the years, it has become a tangible symbol of

the impact and the added value of European programmes". The temporal marker "over the years" and the use of present perfect "has become" is evident here to emphasise the evolution of the programme over time. This is also reasserted by "making student mobility a reality", implying the transformation from the concept of European mobility into real life practice (the Erasmus scheme). Vassiliou draws the audience in by resorting to *pathos* to illustrate the programme's wider recognition today - it is she claims, "a tangible symbol", marked by positive evaluative "impact" and "added value", implying the beneficial outcomes of student mobility that are familiar/ recognisable to the Europeans.

In order to enhance the positive transformative impact that the EU has had on the life of European citizens, Vassiliou reminds her audience of the positive changes that may have been taken for granted or forgotten, but that once served as the stepping stones to the present state of European affairs. She turns to a narrative account by shifting the temporal frame 25 years back, looking diachronically into the major political, economic and social changes that have taken place and that have had an impact on the life of Europeans today. In retrospect, Vassiliou points out that, in the late 1980's, when Erasmus was first launched, "Europe" (i.e., the countries that now form the EU) was very different politically, economically and socially. There still existed the post-Second World War division between the Western and Eastern political blocs, making any contacts across the border almost impossible. What is more, this division was not only political, but it also created psychological and emotional isolation between the people who lived in Europe.

It is against this economic and socio-political context that Vassiliou emphasises the changes that have taken place since then by drawing on a number of contrasting representations of life in Europe in late 1980's as opposed to the beginning of the twenty first century. To demonstrate and to emphasise the scope of changes that have taken place in Europe and have been experienced by the Europeans over time, the narrative moves on chronologically from the

late 1980's, constructing Europe as a community made up of separate states, evident in an absence of common economic ties, (*intensified* by the use of repeated negation in "no common currency", "no common market") and trading market. Singling out the absence of a common "currency" and "market" makes the implicit transformations that have taken place seem more prominent: Europe has emerged from a body of separate socially, economically and politically autonomous states to the present state of the European Union, with a common European currency, a common market and opportunities for work and study mobility.

At the same time, "the new beginning of the European project" alludes to the start of the transformation processes leading to major political and economic changes within the European Union, inevitably bearing an impact on the Europeans. It was against the changing socio-political and economic context of late 1980's that the Erasmus programme was first launched, "as a response to the challenges of those times". It was assumed that the Erasmus programme could help with solving these difficulties, ("challenges"), by bringing the Europeans closer together, thereby forming a community.

The economic and educational changes are backed up by the creation of a metaphorical "new Europe" characterised by "freedom", as opposed to earlier division and "movement", associated with mobility, set against the earlier stagnation. Educational mobility that would equip young Europeans with the necessary knowledge and skills is constructed as contributing to the economic transformation, where material processes would benefit from cognitive gains.

As the new contexts (i.e., the common economic space) emerged, it required the individuals to accommodate to its new demands. This is constructed via the metaphorical entailment of "strengthened" – derived from the conceptual metaphor of EUROPE AS A BUILDING, which has been one of the most salient metaphors in political discourses on Europe since it was first introduced by Gorbachev in late 1980's (Musolff, 2000). The new social actors, who "inhabit" present-day Europe are constructed as "a new generation" (a *nomination*

strategy), setting them temporally and "socio-cognitively" apart from the "old/previous/earlier generation" of Europeans and presupposing new European membership categorisation criteria.

In what follows, Vassiliou justifies the construction of a "contemporary European" via the *topos of definition*. This *topos* is realised by the following conclusion rule, *if a person* (group of persons) *is to be referred to as European(s), they should possess the following characteristics*: be "Europe-minded", marking their predisposition towards Europe, "educated", referring to their intellectual capital, and "young", representing their generational stance and perspectivation. All of these characteristics allude to European Erasmus students, the "pioneers" of studying abroad (in Europe), the social actors, who by undergoing personal change, transform and BUILD new Europe.

Vassiliou implicitly praises the Erasmus programme as she acknowledges with the positive evaluative term "important", the role of each individual Erasmus student in contributing towards social cohesion and political integration in Europe by means of proximal experiences, where Erasmus students live and work together with other Europeans, ("Each Erasmus exchange played a small but important role in bringing European states and peoples closer together"). Both, "Europe-minded" and "bringing European states and people closer together", implies a metaphor of DISTANCE/ PROXIMITY "closer together", suggestive of the emergence/ formation of a 'closely-knit' community (an *in-group* of Europeans), presupposing the European identification as the outcome of Erasmus programme. It is asserted here that Erasmus has contributed to social and political change over the time frame of 25 years by changing the representations attributed to Europe and other Europeans.

5.5 Erasmus: solution to the challenges and demands of the post-modern world

The next extract forms a part of Speech 3 (analysed above), that was split into two extracts for the ease of analysis and discussion and labelled as Speech 3, Extract 2. The title of this section illustrates the thematic pattern selected for the purpose of the analysis and does not represent the title of Vassiliou's speech. In the continuation of her speech celebrating the 25th anniversary of Erasmus programme, the Commissioner points to current (at the time of speech production) European challenges, such as youth unemployment, pointing out the gap in the skills that the Erasmus experience can fill. Vassiliou explicitly promotes and praises the transformative impact of European student mobility scheme (i.e., Erasmus).

Speech 3. Extract 2.

A. Vassiliou. Speech *Learning mobility can help to fight the crisis* at the Conference on the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-345_en.htm (accessed on 11/02/2015) Copenhagen, Denmark. 9 May, 2012

Twenty-five years on Europe, is a very different place, politically, socially and economically. New challenges have replaced the old ones – youth employment, just to mention the most pressing of them – but the Erasmus programme continues to be part of the solution. Today Europe operates under increased global competition. The recent crisis has shown that we must become more creative, more innovative and more entrepreneurial. We need a workforce that has the necessary, high-level skills. This is the challenge Europe is facing. And learning mobility can contribute to tackling it. By enabling students to spend a period studying or working abroad, Erasmus provides them with more than what is for many the experience of a lifetime. It teaches them a foreign language, it hones their communication skills, it improves their interpersonal and intercultural abilities. And we know that these are all skills that employers value greatly. And students seem to share our belief: for the past academic year [2010/11], we really have achieved very encouraging figures with the Erasmus programme.

Erasmus really can open minds and change lives. I spoke earlier of today's most pressing challenges, and I mentioned youth unemployment. There is no doubt that we need to invest more in the education and training of our young people. We need to give them the right tools to succeed.

We live in a world in constant transformation: our societies become more and more complex and diverse; our workplaces are a permanent work-in-progress. Our young people have to cope with increasingly complex tasks and constant change. The jobs of today – and even more those of tomorrow – call for new mind-sets and attitudes. On a personal level, Erasmus makes people more open, more confident and better prepared to face the unknown. On a more general level, the international experience students and staff bring back home also contributes to making their own higher education institutions become more modern.

Against the backdrop of the global and local contexts, characterised by instability and transformation, Vassiliou points to the increasing pressure on contemporary individuals to accommodate to the demands of ongoing change. Postmodern workplaces set high standards for individuals who are required to become more creative, innovative, entrepreneurial, and who need to refine their interpersonal and intercultural abilities. Using these requirements as a

warrant, Vassiliou constructs European youth unemployment as a challenge that needs to be addressed and the Erasmus student mobility scheme as able to resolve this challenge. By drawing on *the topos of responsibility* and *the topos of advantage*, Vassiliou argues for the continuity of the student mobility programme and an increase in funding in order to give more European students an opportunity to gain the necessary life and career skills.

Her argument is embedded in the present political, social and economic contexts in noting the major developments that have taken place in Europe over 25 years since Erasmus programme was launched, in "Twenty-five years on Europe, is a very different place, politically, socially and economically". Here, Vassiliou alludes to major changes, such as the enlargement of the European Union and the creation of a common market and common currency, allowing for more possibilities for trade across Europe as well as more freedom and ease of various forms of mobility (virtual and physical) in almost borderless Europe. Having briefly established the *local* European context of diachronic change, Vassiliou shifts her perspectivation by situating it in relation to a broader, *global* context, "Today Europe operates under increased global competition." This suggests that Europe is affected by the processes of globalisation, challenging Europeans through "global competition". The interaction between the local and global contexts as various elements affecting Europe are invoked via the *conceptual metaphor* of MACHINE, to reference Europe as a "machine" that "operates", powered by the processes of globalisation. In fact, since the seventeenth century STATE AS A MACHINE/ BODY (Mayr, 1986) has been a popular metaphor. This conceptual metaphor evokes not only various processes going on but also the role of various parts of the "machine" (i.e., individuals) for its proper functioning, thus suggesting the interdependence of all parts, where each part has to fulfil a certain function, based on certain "properties" that it is assumed to have. Young Europeans are unable to play a part in the functioning of this MACHINE, alluded to by reference to high European youth unemployment, which may be due to the lack

of necessary skills. Vassiliou refers to the need for acquiring such skills as becoming "more creative", "more innovative" and "more entrepreneurial", all of which indicate the adaptability and openness to change as well as the ability to take initiative (*agency*). It is also argued here that "our young people" (young Europeans) ought to acquire these skills in order to respond to the challenges of the local and global contexts that they enter as they "have to cope with increasingly complex tasks and constant change". The urgency attributed to the change is achieved through *deontic modality* expressing obligation ("have to"). It appears that change is not a matter of free choice for young people today, but instead it is dictated by the demands of post-modernity, which compel young people to find a way to cope with the complexities of the world they live in. Thereby, urging them to modify their way of thinking and behaviour, to accommodate to the needs of the changing contexts (e.g., workplace) that they enter and the different individuals that they meet.

Having established the need for change, Vassiliou emphasises the seriousness of "youth unemployment" today - "New challenges have replaced the old ones – youth employment, just to mention the most pressing of them." She draws attention to the urgency of the problem in Europe by setting it within a historical context and categorising the current situation through the use of a superlative "the most pressing" (an *intensification strategy*), implicitly subverting the other "challenges" that exist today.

The responsibility for high youth unemployment is broadly attributed to Europe through *the topos of responsibility* ("This is the challenge Europe is facing…"). The Commissioner holds Europe accountable for this "challenge" and responsible for taking action in order to resolve it. Through personification of Europe (Europe is "facing" the challenge of youth unemployment), Vassiliou places into the background the responsible social actors, as Europe metonymically stands for "the Europeans", making it appear everyone's (politicians and non-politicians/ all Europeans') responsibility for the plight of young people. In fact, she does this

strategically, to reference the need for continuity of the Erasmus scheme and argues for an increase in funding - **"**There is no doubt that we need to invest more in the education and training of our young people." By means of the contextually-embedded inclusive pronoun "we" ("we need to invest") and possessive pronoun "our" ("our young people"), Vassiliou explicitly addresses all Europeans', as a community, calling on their affiliation with "their young people", urging them to make changes, to take action out of a sense of responsibility.

Vassiliou continues to build her argument by expanding on *the topos of* shared *responsibility* of the Europeans, whose duty is to ensure that young people are equipped for the demands of the global market. She achieves this by extending the BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION metaphor, suggesting the process of development/construction (Musolff, 2004) through the entailment of building 'tools'. The reference to "the right tools" as the result of Erasmus experience hints at acquiring a range of sought-after skills, "a foreign language, […] communication skills, […] interpersonal and intercultural abilities". Among other skills that European students are expected to gain from their study abroad experience, Vassiliou singles out their increased tolerance towards instability, change and uncertainty of postmodern contexts by developing "openness", "confidence" and "readiness to face the unknown". Besides, it is reiterated (similarly to Speech 3 Extract 1 above) that Erasmus students do not benefit alone, as upon return to their home country, they bring new knowledge and skills to their home universities, where they promote and implement their international experience, affecting wider segments of society.

Following this assertion, Vassiliou shifts her stance to point explicitly to the Erasmus programme as being worthy of investment and able to offer a part of the solution for youth unemployment. The scale of the transformation, resulting from student mobility and the uniqueness of the skillset acquired as the result, are reaffirmed by *the topos of advantage/ usefulness* via reference to the superiority of the European student mobility programme. This

is achieved by allusion to the richness of its experience - "Erasmus provides them with more than what is for many the experience of a lifetime". The transformative role of Erasmus and its intensity are marked by emphatic comparison, "more than the experience of a lifetime". Therefore, Vassiliou establishes the significance of Erasmus student mobility in equipping students with an educational experience rivalling that of a lifetime of studies in one's home country.

The *topos of advantage* is further realised by allusion to the positive transformative nature of Erasmus mobility and its impact on the life of a young person. This is captured by reference to the Erasmus slogan, "Erasmus really can open minds and change lives". The use of interdiscursivity enhances the positive outcome of the programme through the CONTAINER metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) - the student's mind is conceptualised as closed until they move to a new setting in which it is opened through the accumulation of new knowledge and skills. At the same time, cognitive transformation resulting from Erasmus has an impact on existential transformation, assuming that the knowledge, experience and skills gained in the course of Erasmus exchange will offer young people more opportunities in life, especially as regards finding and securing employment.

To justify the significance of Erasmus programme as an achievement of EU collaboration, Vassiliou argues for the programme's success once again by reference to the *topos of numbers* - "… students seem to share our belief: for the past academic year [2010/11], we really have achieved very encouraging figures with the Erasmus programme." By alluding to high numbers, ("encouraging figures"), of exchange students who have embarked on the programme, Vassiliou asserts that it suggests approval and recognition of positive "Erasmus' effect". Still, the main rhetorical function of this claim is to emphasise the success and value of the EU by establishing the success and the European ownership of Erasmus programme. This allusion is achieved by means of repeated use of inclusive personal pronoun "we" and

possessive pronoun “our” by backing up the judgement (“our belief”) with an actual tangible result “we really have achieved”. The emphasis on the positive nature of EU achievement as the result of Erasmus is supported by intensifiers “very” and “really” as well as by the positive evaluative “encouraging”, which links to the *topos of numbers*, alluding to Erasmus students being actual proof of successful European cooperation in the sphere of education.

The next section moves on to address the analyses of the representations of Erasmus programme and Erasmus students in the institutional online texts published by the Latvian State Agency of Education.

5.6. Latvian Institutional Online Texts:

Having studied all online publications about Erasmus students and Erasmus exchange programme available on the web page of Latvian State Education Agency that were added between 2010 and 2014, only a limited number of publications directly addressed the research theme of the present study and contained more descriptive-evaluative discourses on the student mobility programme and students themselves. Therefore, in what follows, the descriptive-evaluative extracts from the publications will be presented and analysed both on the *macro* (textual/intertextual) *level* and *micro* (lexico-grammatical) *level*, as has been detailed above, in Chapter 4.

5.6.1. Goals of Erasmus programme:

The following extract comes from the publication made on the official web page of the Latvian State Education Agency on 15.01.2013, with the aim to promote the upcoming visit of the EU Commissioner for Education, A. Vassilliou to launch the new *Erasmus+* programme at

the conference held in Riga, Latvia on 20.01.2013. The full text of that publication can be found by following this link:

http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?text_id=23737 (accessed on 09/06/2019).

In this extract, Dita Traida, the director of Latvian State Education Agency outlines the new goals of *Erasmus+* programme, that will allow to integrate education, science and entrepreneurship. This is achieved by shifting the discursive frame from the level of individual experiencing an exchange on a local level, making a reference to *micro*, Latvian context through *meso*, European and towards the *macro*¸ global context, implying the significance of the exchange programme on the global scale and emphasising the important role of Latvia and Europe in this process.

Text 1. Extract 1.

„Joprojām sabiedrībā aktuāls ir jautājums, kā uzlabot saikni starp izglītību, zinātni un uzņēmējdarbību, lai veicinātu ne tikai Latvijas, bet arī Eiropas konkurētspēju pasaulē. Mēs esam pārliecināti, ka jaunā *Erasmus+* programma spēs uzrunāt, iedvesmot un parādīt daudzpusīgus starpvalstu sadarbības veidus, lai tuvinātu šos sektorus, reizē attīstot iesaistīto indivīdu kompetences," komentē VIAA direktore Dita Traidās.

"To-date in society the following question remains - how to improve the link between education, science and entrepreneurship, in order to boost competitiveness not only in Latvia but also to boost European competitiveness worldwide. We are confident that new Erasmus + programme will be able to address, inspire and show the multiplicity of international opportunities to collaborate in order to bring these sectors closer together, while at the same time developing the competences of the individuals involved" , comments the directors of Latvian State Education Agency, Dita Traida.

In this short excerpt, the director of Latvian State Education Agency draws on the topos *pro bono publico*, meaning "to the advantage of all", which she broadly attributes to the potential outcomes of the Erasmus +. She achieves this by drawing on a temporal reference, embedding its importance in the present day, as well as its wide recognition, by backing up her claim with the reference to "society", other "voices" – other existing discourses. Having established the

importance and broad recognition of the subject, the author of the claim, moves on to a rhetorical question, assuming that there is a need to establish a missing link between "education", "science" and "business". As a solution to the apparent disconnection of the three, Dita Traida (the Director) claims is offered in the face of Erasmus + programme. She shifts the discursive frame, moving from immediate to a broader context, showing how Latvia, as a part of Europe, is able to make a difference on a global scale. This statement is reinforced by plural personal pronoun "we" in the emphatic "we are sure", assumingly referencing the author of the claim, a Latvian representative as well as the EU, the organisation promoting and funding the exchange programme. The transformative nature of the programme is constructed with the help of the verbs, commonly associated with human behaviour "address, inspire and show", implying the individuals' experiences of student mobility, that will allow for the metaphorical "proximity" and connection between what currently remain the three disparate sectors (i.e., education, science and entrepreneurship).

5.6.2. Erasmus + student image and reputation:

The following extract comes from the publication that appeared on the web page of Latvian State Education Agency on 13.12.2013, following a conference organised by the Agency - "From Erasmus till Erasmus Plus: quality and influence". The conference agenda included evaluation of the programme to-date as well as the discussion of the programme's future directions. Among the conference participants, alongside the Latvian Erasmus programme representatives, there were also Erasmus programme representatives and experts from the neighbouring Lithuania and Estonia.

The conference was opened with the address by the deputy head of the Latvian State Education Agency, Elita Zondaka, who emphasised the success and the scale of the Erasmus

programme. She also acknowledged the importance that Erasmus student mobility plays in recognition of the Latvian higher education globally, which she illustrated with facts and figures pointing to the increase in the number of incoming exchange students at the Latvian higher education institutions since the start of the Erasmus exchanges in Latvia.

Among the themes that were mentioned in the conference report, an emphasis was made on the Erasmus+ image that is often attributed to the Erasmus students and is associated with the programme. Among the speakers, who were quoted in the publication, there was Eero Loonurm, a representative from Estonian *Archimedes foundation*, responsible for promotion of Erasmus student mobility in Estonia.

The complete publication can be found following this link:

http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?text_id=39868 (accessed on 09/06/2019)

Text 2 Extract 2:

Konferencē īpaša uzmanība tika pievērsta arī *Erasmus+* tēlam un reputācijai, un E. Lonurms akcentēja, ka kopumā *Erasmus+* programmai ir laba atpazīstamība, bet nereti tai ir jāsadzīvo arī ar ballīšu programmas tēlu, tāpēc visām iesaistītajām pusēm jāstrādā kopā un jāatceras, ka ikviens *Erasmus+* students ir programmas vēstnesis.

A special attention of the conference was drawn also to the Erasmus+ image and reputation, and E. Lonuurm emphasised that all in all the programme is widely recognised but it often has to live side by side with the "party programme" image, which is why all of those involved should remember that every Erasmus student is the programme's representative (ambassador).

The extract begins by asserting that the theme of Erasmus programme's image and reputation has been discussed at the conference – making reference to existing discourses, assumingly adopting a positive representation of Erasmus programme, such as Elita Zondaka's earlier quote, where she asserts, drawing on the programme's size that Erasmus programme is "the largest" and the scale of the programme's recognition on the global level, "the best recognised student mobility programme in the world". This image of programme's significance and high

regard is contrasted by the "party programme image" rhetoric, allegedly ascribing a negative connotation to the Erasmus programme, suggesting that it lacks seriousness and academic spirit. This argumentation strategy corresponds to the *topos of consequence*, where the argumentation follows the pattern that if something (in this case Erasmus programme and its image) is burdened by a specific problem (here: excessive partying of Erasmus students), one should act in order to diminish these burdens. Thus, E. Loonurm, tries to appeal to the common sense of the audience by drawing on the *topos of responsibility*, where he suggests everyone, both programme organisers and students need to take full responsibility for the programme's image. Following this initial claim, E. Loonurm singles out "each Erasmus student", attributing to them an important status of "the Erasmus programme's ambassador", having the status similar to a diplomat or a country's official, calling on their responsibility to solve the problem of the programme's negative representations and discourses.

5.6.3. Economic factors:

The theme related to the decrease in the number of outgoing Latvian students participating in Erasmus student mobility programme made an appearance in the online publications that have been collected for the study. Text 3 Extract 3 is taken from the publication giving an overview of the meeting that was held at the European Union House in Riga on 15.04.2014. It presents some possible reasons and attempts to offer an explanation behind the decrease in the number of outgoing Erasmus students in Latvia.

The fear of losing their jobs in Latvia is taken as the starting point of this publication and a possible explanation for the decline in outward student mobility in Latvia, suggesting that Latvian employers are unwilling to support international mobility of their staff. From this point onwards, the argument is developed through the institutional and personal discourses of different speakers: a representative from the University of Latvia, a former Latvian Erasmus

student working for a large Latvian building and construction company and finally, an Adviser on Education and Employment Affairs from the Employers' Confederation of Latvia.

The complete publication can be found following this link:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?year=2019&text_id=40611 (accessed on 15/06/2019)

Text 3 Extract 3:

Viens no iemesliem, kas attur strādājošos studentus no *Erasmus*+ mobilitātes, ir bailes pazaudēt savu vietu Latvijas darba tirgū – ne visi darba devēji ir gatavi palaist savu darbinieku mobilitātē uz vairākiem mēnešiem. Latvijas Universitātes ārlietu vadītājas **Alīnes Gržibovskas** pieredze liecina, ka valsts institūcijas ir labvēlīgāk noskaņotas pret savu darbinieku došanos Erasmus+ praksē un studijām, jo redz izaugsmi ilgtermiņā.

"Kad man radās iespēja doties studiju mobilitātē uz Prāgu, mana vadība bija ļoti atvērta," stāsta bijušais *Erasmus*+students, SIA "Skonto būve" būvdarbu vadītāja palīgs **Mareks Petrovskis**. "Redzēju, ka iegūtās zināšanas vēlāk varēšu izmantot darbā – Čehijā apguvu darbu ar 3D modelēšanas programmu, kuru tagad izmantoju ikdienā. Domāju, ja cilvēkam patīk savs darbs, viņš pēc pieredzes gūšanas ārvalstīs atgriezīsies pie sava darba devēja." Uzņēmums pieņem Erasmus+ praksē arī ārvalstu studentus un redz, ka šāda apmaiņa nes ieguvumus abām pusēm, palīdz kolektīvam savstarpējā komunikācijā un audzē starpkultūru kompetenci.
[…]

Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācijas pārstāve **Anita Līce** akcentēja, ka mazāk kā pusei Latvijas darba devēju ir pieredze, nodrošinot praksi vietējiem jauniešiem, tāpēc gatavība ārvalstu Erasmus+ praktikantiem ir jautājums, pie kā jāstrādā. "*Erasmus*+ ir lielisks instruments, kā veicināt starptautisko kompetenci vietējā darba tirgū, kas Latvijai kā mazai, bet atvērtai ekonomikai ir ļoti būtiski."

One of the reasons that discourages working students from *Erasmus*+ mobility is the fear of losing their place in the Latvian labor market - not all employers are willing to let their employees go abroad for several months. The Head of International Relations of the University of Latvia, **Alīne Grzibovska** argued that state institutions are more supportive of their students and staff embarking on *Erasmus* + studies or work placement abroad, as they see this as a long-term investment.

"When I had the opportunity to study abroad in Prague, my company's leadership was very supportive," says Mareks Petrovskis, a former *Erasmus*+ student from "Skonto Buve" (*a building/construction company). I saw that I could use my knowledge later in my work - in the Czech Republic I got a job with a 3D modeling program that I use today in my current work. I

think if a person likes their job, he/she will return to his / her employer after gaining experience abroad.
[…]

Anita Līce, an Adviser on Education and Employment Affairs at the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK), emphasized that less than half of Latvian employers have experience in providing work placement to the local youth, so this determines their unwillingness to offer work placements to foreign *Erasmus+* trainees. "*Erasmus+* is a great tool for promoting international competence in the local labor market, which is very important for Latvia as a country with a small but open economy."

The extract builds on the topos of advantage of student mobility for all, the employer and the employee in the face of students who experience Erasmus mobility. The argument draws on several discourses, institutional and personal, all of which emphasise the importance and the value of student mobility, as well as its recognition in Latvia, arguing for the advantages of the programme and the values that it encompasses.

First, the Head of International Relations of the University of Latvia, Alīne Grzibovska, as a university representative, draws on an implicit comparison between "state institutions", that are constructed in positive terms. including the university that she represents as opposed to the negative connotation that she ascribes by default to the privately-owned enterprises. In so doing, A. Grzibovska constructs state institutions as superior and forward-thinking, recognising the important benefits that students gain from the experience of student mobility. To intensify the impact of the claim, she makes a reference to the term commonly associated with the domain of business, "long-term investment", pointing out that state institutions will reap the results and "profit" from allowing their students and staff to benefit from all that Erasmus mobility has to offer.

Next, comes a quote from a former Erasmus student and an employee of a well-established private building/ construction company, which seems to represent the view that some privately-owned enterprises recognise the important benefits of student mobility. In fact,

the speaker, Mareks Petrovskis intensifies the impact of his claim by using adverb “very” in reference to the positive response of his company’s leadership to his absence during the traineeship abroad. His account also stresses the link between his past experience of student mobility and the continuity of the knowledge and experience gained during his traineeship in another European country, Czech Republic benefitting his acquired expertise, constructed via a temporal refence “today” and “current”.

The speaker also adds that following the experience of mobility, the employee is likely to return to his company, implicitly suggesting that employers might fear losing their employee once they take on a traineeship abroad. The subjectivity of the speaker’s stance marked by “I think”, mitigates the force of the argumentation that emerges here, building on the following argumentation schemata: given that the employee who wishes to embark on a traineeship abroad has a positive attitude towards his/her job, following their traineeship abroad, is likely to return to their employer. Thus, allowing a staff member to go abroad, appears not only to be an investment into staff members’ professional development, but also a test of their allegiance to the workplace.

Finally, Anita Līce, an Adviser on Education and Employment Affairs at the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia (LDDK), attempts to justify not only private enterprises’ seeming unwillingness to offer traineeships to foreign students, but also constructs a discourse on Latvia’s support of the Erasmus exchange and Latvia’s loyalty towards Europe. The effect of the claim is enhanced by the use of building/construction metaphor in “Erasmus+ is a great tool”. Thus, mobility that Erasmus+ encompasses is linked with the process of construction of Latvia and its relationship with Europe. In her claim, A. Līce also determines her stance and affiliation with Latvia via a spatial reference, “local”, while arguing for the importance of Latvia’s co-operation and willingness to build affiliations with Europe via the Erasmus. Implicitly, the economic power and the size of Europe are called on here and compared to

Latvia that is “small”. Despite its size, Latvia is ascribed a positive characteristic, “open”, indicating Latvia’s inclination to co-operate with Europe and/or other countries, and the awareness of the positive impact that this co-operation has on the Latvian economy.

5.6.4. ‘Brain drain’ phenomenon:

Extract 4 below is taken from the publication giving an overview of the meeting that was held at the European Union House in Riga on 15.04.2014 and Extract 5 comes from the publication that appeared on the web page of Latvian State Education Agency on 13.12.2013, following a conference organised by the Agency - “From Erasmus till Erasmus Plus: quality and influence”. The decision to use both extracts here was determined by the common theme that they share – an apparent tendency of Latvian students to opt for study abroad and to remain in the foreign country instead of returning to Latvia. This is clearly raised in the extracts as a concern and it is against this that Erasmus student mobility is viewed positively, as opposed to the full-degree study abroad option, as at the end of the Erasmus exchange, the course requires the mobile students to return to their home country. Thus, student mobility outside the constraints of Erasmus is regarded in negative terms and as a threat, rather than a benefit to Latvia.

Text 2 Extract 4:

Latvijas Universitātes ārlietu vadītāja A. Gržibovska uzskata, ka gan studentam, gan darba devējam tieši abu mobilitāšu kombinācija ir visveiksmīgākais risinājums, jo studijas dod bāzes zināšanas, bet prakse – iemaņas. Turklāt *Erasmus+* mobilitāte dod pienesumu valsts ekonomikai un attīstībai, jo šie studenti atgriežas mūsu valstī, atšķirībā no tiem, kuri nolēmuši savu augstākās izglītības diplomu iegūt ārvalstu augstskolās.

The Head of International Relations of the University of Latvia, A. Grzibovska believes that student mobility programme offers the best option to both, students and the employers, as studies provide the foundation for knowledge, while practical experience teaches skills. Besides, Erasmus + mobility contributes to the country’s economy and development, as the students who return to our country, as opposed to those students who have chosen to gain their degree from a university abroad.

The complete publications can be found following these links:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?year=2019&text_id=40611 (accessed on 16/06/2019)

Text 3 Extract 5:

Erasmus+ studiju vai prakses laikā iegūtās pieredzes atzīšana arī ir bijis būtisks mobilitātes veicinātājs.Nereti tā palīdz novērst arī smadzeņu aizplūšanas fenomenu, jo studentam ir jāatgriežas savā mītnes valstī.

One of the major incentives behind Erasmus+ has been the recognition of study credits or knowledge gained as a result of a traineeship abroad. Often, this has also helped to prevent the brain drain phenomenon, as upon the completion of the exchange, students are obliged to return to the home country.

The complete publication can be found following this link:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?text_id=39868 (accessed on 16/6/2019)

Extract 4 and extract 5 build their argumentation of the benefit of Erasmus programme, as opposed to the full degree study abroad by drawing on two topoi: *the topos of danger* and *the topos of advantage/ usefulness*, '*pro bono publico'* (i.e., to the advantage of all) (see Wodak, 2001:73). The two topoi are also drawn upon to construct two opposing groups of mobile students: those who do not return to Latvia, following their study abroad, leading to a "brain drain phenomenon" (referenced by the topos of danger) and those who are obliged to return to their home country upon the completion of their exchange programme, as is the case with the Erasmus programme, and who contribute to the country's economy with their internationally-acquired knowledge and skills (referenced by the topos of advantage/usefulness). It is by building on these contrasting topoi and grouping associated with this that the advantage of Erasmus programme over the whole programme study abroad is established.

Summary:

The analysis of three extracts selected from political speeches delivered by Vassiliou over a two-year period examines the nature of one type of *top-down* discourse emanating from the EU Commission in relation to the *Erasmus programme* and *Erasmus exchange students*. The Commissioner indirectly supports Urry's (2007) "mobilities framework", which takes into account the relationship between society and mobility, assuming that individual practices can inform larger society as well as *vice versa*.

Vassiliou constructs the *Erasmus programme* as a successful outcome of EU collaboration in the sphere of education, beneficial for all Europeans. On the basis of this claim, the Commissioner argues for the importance of continuity of the scheme by making allusions to the long-standing tradition of student mobility, its beneficial nature and impact. Even though it is implicit that the Medieval counterparts of modern-day Erasmus students, were individuals of a different calibre (i.e., they had more power in university decision-making processes) than today's Erasmus students, the benefits of student mobility remain similar in many ways.

Moreover the *Erasmus programme* is constructed as capable of living up to European challenges, such as high youth unemployment. Vassiliou supports the common political and institutional opinions with regard to the outcomes of the European student mobility (Papatsiba, 2006) that Erasmus students benefit from *academically* and *professionally* via their stay abroad. Student mobility being "a cognitive affair", recognised in the *Green Paper on Learning Mobility* (2009), is linked with "knowledge and knowledge-based economies", being able to equip young people with the "right skills". This implies that Erasmus makes the European youths benefit from an experience of studying and/or working in another European country, thereby boosting their employment opportunities in the future.

In her speeches, Vassiliou establishes *Erasmus students* by allusion to the "communities of practice", characterised by their "mobility capital" (Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013), rather

than only the historical context of their travels. This community of practice is represented by active mobile travellers, crossing not only geographical (physical) but also linguistic, imaginary and socio-psychological borders. Their distinct status represents a community beyond national identifications, belonging to a political category of "non-nationals" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2008:10), with their prevailing "European identity" realised via enhanced affiliation with Europe and other Europeans.

Among the benefits that the Erasmus experience has to offer is the strengthened sense of European belonging and identity among the mobile students. Thus, Vassiliou argues for the *transformative* nature of Erasmus student mobility experience (Udrea, 2012) which changes the perspectivation of young Europeans from a narrow national one to a broader European outlook, promoting "European identities" (Mitchell, 2012). Thus, being brought into close proximity with other Europeans she argues, mobile students develop a more *inclusive* perception of their "neighbours", and become more aware of their own European belonging. This has long been one of the EU aims behind student mobility and has also been openly stated in the founding document of the Council of Ministers (Single European Act, 1987; see Chapter 2).

Among other gains, stay abroad appears to be the time when one is encouraged to reflect on the new experiences, the new encounters and culturally diverse practices. Erasmus setting contributes to gaining a range of beneficial new skills and personal qualities. The unfamiliar social and physical settings are likely to promote independence and self-reliance, as Erasmus students are encouraged to find ways to adapt and accept what is new and unfamiliar. By observing the unfamiliar behaviour of those they meet, Erasmus students are encouraged to gain better understanding of different cultural practices, as well as become more reflexive about their own behaviour.

What is more, it is argued that the knowledge and skills acquired in the course of student mobility are not restricted to the study abroad context. Rather, all of these are carried and implemented after the exchange students go back to their home universities, as they become the "ambassadors of change". Thus, the transformations and gains resulting from Erasmus act as *bottom-up* processes affecting wider European society with significant changes already taking place (and others that are yet to be seen) as the result of Erasmus (cf. Benhold, 2005).

To construct her argument with reference to the *Erasmus* scheme in relation to Europe, Vassiliou repeatedly uses the *topos of usefulness/ advantage,* expanding its scope by allusion to *pro bono publico* - benefit of Erasmus exchange for all, achieved by means of positive evaluative referencing of the Erasmus programme. This claim about the positive/successful nature of the Erasmus exchange is also supported by the *topos of justice* and *topos of equality*. She claims that the benefits of Erasmus should be experienced by everyone (irrespective of their social status), thereby indirectly addressing the criticism of Erasmus programme's exclusivity (only for "rich Europeans"). At the same time, to legitimise the claim for usefulness and advantage of Erasmus student mobility and its widespread status, Vassiliou resorts to *the topos of numbers,* demonstrating high numbers of European youths opting for and benefitting from Erasmus possibilities, marked by positive evaluatives and conceptual CONTAINER metaphor, presupposing cognitive gains (i.e., "open mind") as the result of student mobility. The successful nature of Erasmus is also made explicit throughout the three speeches analysed here via a range of linguistic and rhetorical means, including *assertions*, *rhetorical questions*, *comparatives* and *superlatives*, as well as an abundance of *intensifiers* to emphasise and promote the success of the EU.

The positive change to refer to progress and improvement (owing to Erasmus) is realised via *metaphorical cross-domain mapping*, particularly the conceptual metaphor of BUILDING, referencing Europe, and Europe as a MACHINE. The former (BUILDING)

conceptual metaphor refers to an ongoing process involving active participation and transformation, taking control of one's own life/work and the latter (MACHINE) implies interdependence of each of the "cogs" (the European citizens) in the process of smooth and coherent functioning of the whole machine (Europe).

In the online texts published by Latvian State Education Agency, it becomes apparent that the Erasmus programme is held in high esteem, with the focus on the knowledge and skills that individuals and institutions can benefit from as the outcome of exchanges and traineeships. In Latvian institutional context Erasmus is also regarded as an opportunity for Latvian higher educational institutions to become recognised globally. Besides, co-operation in the sphere of education allows to forge important social and economic ties between Latvia, Europe and the rest of the world. The issues of the programme's image as a "party" programme has been regarded as a possible shortcoming of the scheme and the responsibility for the construction of a positive image has been assigned to all of the individuals embarking on the programme. Finally, positive inclination towards Erasmus programme appears to be determined as this type of mobility does not threaten Latvian demographic and economic situation, obliging the students to return home following their stay abroad.

In terms of argumentation strategies, the topos of advantage or *pro bono publico* seemed to recur in the Latvian institutional context with the reference to the Erasmus programme, asserting its benefits for the individuals as well as for Latvian economy. At the same time the topos of threat and the topos of danger were also identified in reference to the potential risks that may result from other types of student mobility outside the constraints of the Erasmus. Intensification strategies were employed to emphasise the contrast between the size of Latvia as opposed to Europe as well as to point to the significance of the positive transformative effect of the programme on individuals embarking on study abroad, the employers allowing their employee to undertake a traineeship abroad and the institutions allowing student mobility. At

times, different popular discourses were referred to in order to back up claims and give them more credibility, such as discourse of "brain drain". Metaphors related to construction and distance/proximity were used to reference the importance that Latvia attributes to its affiliation with Europe by recognising and supporting the Erasmus programme.

The next chapter turns to DHA-informed analysis and discussion of the corpus of empirical interviews with incoming Erasmus students in Latvia. We explore whether similar strategies and linguistic devices are employed by the students themselves in their descriptions of their Erasmus experience, in particular through their realisation of 'the self' and 'the other', therefore examining consonance or dissonance, difference vs. similarity in top-down and bottom-up discourses.

Chapter 6: Interview Analyses and Findings

This chapter focuses on the emerging patterns of identity construction in interviews with 15 in-coming Erasmus exchange students in Latvia (see Appendix 5 for the complete transcript of all the recorded interviews). However, in the analysis of the student interview extracts a slightly different approach is taken, with the key focus on mobile students' representations of 'self' and 'other'. This focus differs from the analysis of political speeches, widening the scope of the analysis to other issues present in discourses of Erasmus students. Studying the two types of data allows us to gain insight into what the personal subjective experiences of mobility by Erasmus students are and compare and contrast them to the representations of student mobility emerging from the formal speeches of the Commissioner. It is acknowledged here that there may appear contextual and thematic genre-related discrepancies between the two types of data. Therefore, in order to make a valid comparison between these different genre texts, it is important to apply methodological and analytical consistency. In the discussion of the interviews, the focus remains (similarly to that in political

speeches discussed in Chapter 5) on the discourse, particularly on the Erasmus students' choice of *discursive strategies* and the *linguistic means and forms of realisation*. Also, in the DHA-informed analysis of the interview data that follows, heuristically I draw on five research questions adapted from Wodak & Meyer (2009:93) and detailed in Chapter 3, guiding and focusing the analysis and discussion (similarly to the political speeches).

The analysis of the interviews presented here follows a tri-partite categorisation into "Self and Erasmus" (Section 6.1), "Self and Locals" (Section 6.2), "Self and Compatriots" (Section 6.3), which stand for the main groups of social actors referenced by the interviewees. This grouping determines the structure of the chapter to follow. Each section presents an exploration of identity construction centred around the recurrent themes in relation to each of the three groups (see Appendix 4 for "the Matrix of Topics" and Chapter 4 for a detailed account on the choice of recurrent themes). The extracts from the interview transcripts selected and presented here for an extended analysis of identity construction were representative of a broader bank of data. The number of occurrences of both the *macro-topic-related instances* and the *sub-topics* is clearly shown in *The Matrix of Topics* (see Appendix 4) and in the Tables throughout this chapter.

6.1 Self and Erasmus:

Motivated by students' responses, "Erasmus" here is used as a category that represents both the context of the student mobility programme and the Erasmus student community that each interviewee is a part of. Thus "self" emerges through construction of binary categorisations (complex relations towards "the Other", Wodak, 2006), or here it appears as construction of *self* in relation to *Erasmus* (community and programme). The analysis in this section is the most extensive, (compared to the other two sections, section 6.2 *Self and Locals* and section 6.3 *Self and Compatriots*), since the discussion around and about Erasmus formed

a large part of the interview process as well as being the predominant reality of the context that the Erasmus students were living in and reflecting on in the interviews. In this section, the analysis is structured chronologically (following the questions in the interview guide) moving from the students' initial entry through personal change to the settlement and creation of new affiliations.

6.1.1. Journey into the Erasmus community

The initial stages of the stay abroad were described in earlier studies of student mobility as a challenging time for young Europeans (also see Chapter 2), associated with a sense of disorientation, homesickness and loneliness. Changes in the socio-cultural and linguistic settings have heightened these feelings and encouraged the mobile students to seek out recognition by establishing new "social networks". Due to the peculiarity of the Erasmus programme set up (as discussed in Chapter 2) and Erasmus student's status in the host country, mobile students tend to be more exposed to other Erasmus and international students and less so to the locals. This encourages them to form friendships with other exchange students, with whom they find common ground, creating an almost exclusive community of exchange students. These initial stages are reflected in the title of the first *macro-topic*, implying the processual nature of the Erasmus experience, evolving from the initial stages, following students' arrival to their socialisation into the Erasmus community, referenced in the *sub-topics* shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Sub-topics realising the macro topic *Journey into Erasmus community*

Sub-topic	**Number of occurrences**	**Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript**

Initial shock of entry	3	L 565-570; Ar 1110-1124; Ge 1686-1687; Ka 2093-2099
From strangeness to familiarisation with the environment	4	L 565-570; Ar 1110-1124; Ge 1686-1687; Ka 2093-2099
From homesickness/loneliness to establishing friendships	7	Al 56-61; 82-86; Kr 272-278; Ka 2093-2094; Br 1343-1346; Ch 1431-1432;1437-1439; J 1786-1787; Kat 2208-2213;2233-2234
Erasmus friendly family	7	L 675-682; J 1787-1790; 1980-1987; Kat 2208-2213; U 2586-259; Al 794-796; An 954-958; Ka 2072-2076;
Establishing common ground		L 572-575; Ard 1204-1208; J 1750-1754; Jo 1933-1936; 1947-1958

Each *sub-topic* in Table 6 is analysed below with a focus on the *discursive strategies* and *linguistic means of realisation* in identity construction, reflecting on their development across the dataset.

6.1.1.1 Initial shock of entry

1:

(a) I just arrived and I said: *Ok you will be here for six months and it's a very big shock for you,* that's why I could not do something with it. After three days I recognized that, *ok, I'm in Latvia, I make my Erasmus scholarship and it's not home*…[…]
(Anna, 943-947)

(b) the first days were very difficult, because when I was in Estonia and thinking, I was so calm: *ok, tomorrow I will go, it's Riga and…* and when I first came here, I thought*: oh, what am I doing here?!* And then I realized*: ok, I'm here now and my life is here*.
(Lissi, 596-599)

These extracts reveal that he initial stage of entry into the host country provokes a mixture of strong emotions among the Erasmus students and as a response they strive to find comfort and reassurance. An initial shock is apparent in the reporting of recurrent psychological *dissociative acts* such as "derealisation" (not being able to understand where one is) emerging through

discourse, especially the "externalised internal dialogue" (Steinberg & Schnall, 2003) with oneself. By role-playing a "constructed dialogue" (see Tannen 1989: 98–133) these students dramatize their emotional response to the unfamiliar context. The speakers authenticate their claim to the initial difficulties, intensified by the adverb "very" with reference to the scale "a very big shock" and the level of difficulty "very difficult" in relation to their sense of displacement.

The students are acutely aware that their feelings of distress are related to the change of setting, associated not only with the shift in geographical location but also with the shift in the speaker's understanding of their *perspectivation*, as in "I'm *here now* and *my life* is *here*". In both extracts, spatial and temporal references are salient, pointing to the different stages of the stay. The arrival, marked by an abundance of temporal conjunctions (*just arrived, first days, when I first came*), associated with shock and an inability to take any action and difficulty of dealing with the new context. The later stages (up to the moment of speaking), are marked by the use of temporal reference, "after three days", "then", "now". It is during the later stages that the speaker appears to feel more at ease, having found their bearings, indicated by the spatial references "here"(in the host country), toponym/ geonym "in Latvia".

The change in *perspectivation* throughout the stay is principally constructed as a cognitive process, marked by the verbs referencing mental states, "recognised", "thinking", "thought", and "realised". These processes also point to the change in perception that takes place over time, from recognition and reflection about the unknown to coming to terms with and accepting "strangeness". What was once unfamiliar and disturbing/strange ("a very big shock"), becomes a familiar reality that the students appear to come to accept (as in "I'm in Latvia, I make my Erasmus scholarship and it's not home…[…]).

6.1.1.2 Adaptation to the host environment

2:

(a) The first few days it was *strange* – I felt *strange* and lost, but I think that it's normal when you are going to a foreign country, in the beginning you don't know where to go and you hear a *strange* language around that you don't understand, so my first impression was that for me everything was that I couldn't understand…

(Kasia, 2093-2099)

(b) …you get out of your really convenient life. You don't know, I didn't know when I came here, I didn't know what to expect and I thought it's more *difficult*, but no, you just have to be more open-minded and... At first it was more *difficult* but after some days if you make some new friends and it's not…if you know what's going on, I think in another country if you know how the public transportation works and like this… for the first time it's like this, but now I know the city almost.

(Lissi, 565-570)

(b) Yeah, the *difference* in language and it's hard to orientate as good as at home. Feeling this that you don't understand what's really going on and you have to think every step through several times.. […]. What to say to when you buy food or something special, how to say certain things. At home you just go and ask and here you have to… and it creates this kind of feeling of helplessness a little bit. […]First you start seeing… the things that seem to you very obvious, the world with much more colour. It's a process, first you come, you start, you don't think about it and you get a bit annoyed if you can't find the things the same as that you usually do and then you open up your mind, then you do the things differently and then you realise that it also works and then you compare… which way is better, which way is not and if it matter at all… […] and it makes you think that if you have the same aim, you can reach it in two different ways.

(Ardi, 1110-1124)

As the exchange students are taken out of their familiar environment, they enter the new setting, coming into contact with the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the "foreign country", of a "strange language", transportation etc. In response to the initial experiences of the stay, the speakers construct themselves by reflecting on their new alignment through their active experiences as the strangers to both "worlds", having left their home country and experiencing alienation in relation to the new context.

The trying nature of the entry into the new environment is *intensified* by juxtaposition between the ease of living in the home country, as a "really convenient life", where everything is familiar, as opposed to the novelty and strangeness of the new setting, causing "inconvenience" and the realization of one's own and others' strangeness, foreignness or disconnection. It is also presupposed that the experience of being a stranger (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) requires more effort, while triggering "identity work", trying to work out who one has become in the new environment. This process is reflected in speakers' stance towards *self as*

an outsider in relation to the host country/community, apparent through spatial disorientation, in "it's hard to orientate as good as at home", as opposed to the habitual familiarity of the home country.

Despite the initial state of being at a loss and having a sense of linguistic and social exclusion, Kasia, Lissi and Ardi recognise another, *later stage* of the stay, signalled by the adverbs marking temporal shift - "later", "then", "after some days" - implying the transformation and adaptation to the new environment. Awareness of the necessity to change, dictated by the new context, corresponds to the *topos of reality*, which asserts that because reality is what it is (i.e., different from home country/ environment), the students have to find a way to modify their behaviour in order to accept and fit in with the new reality.

Although Lissi and Ardi acknowledge their change and adaptation in relation to the new environment, the individual perceptions of what involves "adaptation" differ. For instance, for Lissi, creating social affiliations (friendships) and learning to navigate in the local environment, grants her confidence and the sense of comfort in the new setting, as in "if you make some new friends […], if you know how the public transportation works …" However, for Ardi adaptation represents a cognitive - behavioural change, "and then you open up your mind, […] do the things differently and then you realise that it also works and then you compare…which way is better, which way is not and if it matter at all...[…]". The reference to "open mind" here appears embedded in a narrative, describing different stages of the process of adaptation presupposing that it is time-bound transformative process. The transformation takes place on the level of cognition, as the metaphoric "opening of the mind"[47] by not only becoming aware but also by becoming more tolerant towards difference. The conceptual metaphor "open mind" implies that the mind resembles a CONTAINER that normally stays closed, but having been triggered by

[47] "Open up your mind" also echoes and recontextualises the motto of the Erasmus programme quoted by Vassiliou in her speech analysed in Chapter 5 ("Erasmus: changing lives, opening minds http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-leaflet_en.pdf (accessed on 19.05.2015)

new contexts and new experiences undergoes conscious "opening", or transformation. One becomes more critical of habitual behaviours and patterns, comparing "the familiar" with "the unfamiliar", thereby coming to terms with the different practices."

6.1.1.3 Establishing the boundaries:

3:

(a) At first when I arrived I felt very strange, like a fish out of water, because I didn't know anyone, but then everyone [Erasmus students] had arrived and it became better. […]So we formed a little group and we felt really close and we started to form close bonds among ourselves. Because none of us knew anybody outside the group, so it came natural that we became good friends – it's special.

(Alisa, 56-61)

(b) The first two weeks like for the first month I was really […] lonely and I think it was especially hard […]. So just getting used to living on my own and like at first I have been around the Erasmus students. They were talking their own language, like, German usually, but then I found more and more they got used to talking English, to try and have a more including feeling. But at first it was a lonely feeling and I wanted to leave […].

(Chie, 272-278)

(c) I think when I knew more people, Erasmus people, together we made a group of foreigners. I want to say that when I knew more people, I felt more safe and much better.

(Kasia, 2093-2094)

In 3(a-c), the theme of initial 'loneliness' is characterized by a search for contact with similar others (i.e., *Erasmus students, other foreigners*). The temporal element was typically realized in the form of a chronological narrative: in retrospective covering the development of social relationships from the beginning through to the later stages of the stay. Once again, the time element is marked by the temporal clause "at the beginning" and by the adverb "later", indicating the various stages of the stay, where the initial stages are characterized by being alone and the later stages as having formed affiliations and having established friendships. For instance, to reference the beginning of the stay, the vivid simile - *like a fish out of water* - emphasizes the sense of disconnection to the new environment due to the absence of the student's "own group" (left behind), which rationalises their subsequent search for similar others, the other exchange students.

Willingness to develop social affiliations, attachments as well as the creation of a new "in-group" is realized by asserting *membership categories* based on group belonging, marked by the named collectives of "group", "friends" and "Erasmus students". This suggests affiliations with other Erasmus students in Alisa's narrative, further intensified by the switch from initial first person singular pronoun "I" when constructing the initial "lonely" and disconnected experiences, as opposed to the inclusive collective pronoun "we", to mark the formation of friendships and affiliations later during the stay.

However, friendships could depend on language choice, which as Chie acknowledges may serve as *inclusion/exclusion* criteria even among the exchange students themselves: "they were talking their own language, like German usually, but then I found more and more they got used to talking English, to try and have a more including feeling". In fact, these initial affiliations with co-nationals and/or fellow exchange students are quite common and support the claims made in Coleman's "model of social circles" representing the typical formation of relations with different social/national groups in the course of study abroad (Coleman, 2014). Coleman's research and model also suggest that it is common for exchange students to first establish affiliations with their co-nationals (if there are any) and only later to establish contact with other "foreigners" (e.g., other exchange/ international students), while struggling to meet or befriend locals. This pattern is also confirmed by the interviewees in the present study, who discuss mobile students' *in-group* status in relation to other Erasmus students, contrasted by an *out-group* status in relation to the host community. Erasmus students' status is constructed via the *topos of comparison/difference* (*argumentation strategy of dissimilation/ exclusion*), established by reference to the inferior size of their group, "little group", and their political status, marked by the synecdochical anthroponym: "a group of foreigners", in comparison to the size and status of the local community. At the same time, the affiliation with Erasmus community is further established by being on the "inside" of the

metaphorical “borders” between the locals and Erasmus students, implied by Alisa in “none of us knew anybody outside the group”.

6.1.1.4. Erasmus togetherness

As evidenced in the extracts in 4 below, Erasmus students attempt to cultivate relationships based on their familiar familial and friendship groups at “home”:

4.

(a) I guess, in the dormitory, other exchange students are in the same situation, we are like family maybe. So, in my opinion, everyone helps everyone else. If anyone is unhappy, then the other is there and tries to comfort him or her. And if anyone has problems, then…we are 4-5 people who are sort of like "parents" we are in upper-intermediate (Latvian) class… and if anyone needs to go to the doctor's, then it's always us who always goes there, in case, in case the doctors don't speak English.

(Ulrieke, 2586-2591)

(b) At home I need a lot of time to call somebody a friend but here, we live 24 hours together, going to classes together, going on different trips together, and we are far away from home, we have// I mean, every one of us has their own life and their problems and we are in some ways forced to rely on each other and be together… we need each other and on the other hand we have great fun together.

(Kasia, 2072-2076)

Ulrieke, goes as far as constructing the Erasmus community via the emotionally loaded collective metaphor of the "Erasmus family", emphasising the presence of constancy and consistency, of strong intimate ties between the exchange students, (also referenced by the similes "like family" and "like parents"). As Ulrieke elaborates on the conceptual metaphor of FAMILY, she invokes such responsibilities as "helping" and "comforting" others when they are in need of reassurance and support, similar to the relationship between parents and children. The familial relationship among the exchange students is also based on a hierarchy of responsibility towards those who need help (*inferior*, allegedly "children") and those who can provide/offer help (*superior*, allegedly "parents"). This differentiation is constructed according to the level of linguistic ability in the local language (Latvian), granting them a "special status" if they are fluent, as it allows them to act as *mediators* between Erasmus students and the locals (e.g., doctors).

A somewhat different understanding of Erasmus community is constructed by Kasia, who revisits the connotational meaning that she ascribes to "friendship". She draws on spatial and temporal references in order to establish this category: "at home I need a lot of time to call somebody a friend". She acknowledges that to ascribe someone the status of "a friend", a significant amount of time needs to elapse. However, the context of student mobility appears to alter her stance, as it promotes and encourages an institutionally-shaped community, characterised by "togetherness". The sense of belonging to a community of exchange students

is marked by continuous togetherness and shared practices, marked by the temporal reference "here we live *24 hours together*…", shared experiences, "going to *classes together*, going to *different trips together*" and maintaining a similar status in the host country/ in relation to "home", "we are f*ar away from home*", as well as explicit *relational identifications* towards the Erasmus community.

However, while asserting similarity among Erasmus students via shared experiences and by constructing shared need for support via the use of an *assimilation strategy*, Kasia and Ulrieke also resort to a *dissimilation strategy*, to acknowledge individuality and difference among Erasmus students. This is used to point out Erasmus students' ownership and ability to take control of "their own life" and "their own problems" to argue for mobile students' freedom of choice in decision-making processes, despite the "institutionally-set togetherness".

6.1.1.5. Markers of Similarity and Difference

5:

(a) […] friends I made in Erasmus course, which is very obvious, that I became good friends with one German student, which is obvious, because of cultural similarities, because if Italians and others are always late, then we are already sitting and always on time and doing other typical stuff. And so we understood things similarly and so we became good friends.

(Ardi, 1204-1208)

(b) […] with the Polish girls we try to speak our languages, even though there are great differences between our languages, but I like Polish very much, because my grandfather was born in Poland and I come from Czech Republic, which is very close to Poland and I like the Poles and Poland. (Jan, 1750-1754)

When reflecting on friendships among the Erasmus students, Ardi pointed to "cultural similarities" in relation to the norms and values on the basis of which friendships were established. He resorts to both the *strategies of assimilation* and *dissimilation*, realised through the *topoi of similarity* and *difference* by reference to national groups that are "similar" in contrast to the differences with other national groups. Here, the friendship with a German student is constructed on the assumption of national resemblances between him, marked by a

synecdochical anthroponym, (German) and the speaker's national affiliation (Estonian). Their affiliations are also constructed through the positive evaluative phrase "good friend" and further marked by reference to their shared understanding of "time" and the cultural value attributed to "being always on time".

The similarity between Ardi and his friend is further enhanced by comparison and contrast with the different behaviour of "Italian students and others", who are "always late", emphasis achieved by the use of adverb "always" to highlight the speaker's evaluative stance towards Italians and "other". This culturally-determined categorisation is suggestive of common stereotypes about "the punctuality of Germans" and "lateness of Italians", suggesting the speaker's engagement in stereotype-based *membership categorisation* by typifying "imagined communities".

Another Erasmus student, Jan, also resorts to national and ethnic categories as determining the common ground among Erasmus students. The speaker's national identity, (marked by the geonym "Czech Republic"), establishes his background and affiliations (ethnic, linguistic, national, relational). Jan also establishes his familial affiliations with Poland (the grandfather who was born in Poland), as well as arguing for the geographical/spatial/linguistic proximity between his native country and Poland. This claim is intensified by the emphatic spatial marker "very close", thereby arguing for the legitimacy of the speaker's dual belonging towards his home country (Czech Republic), but also towards Poland.

In constructing his friendships in the course of student mobility among international (predominantly other European) students, the speaker singles out "the Polish girls". Their national and linguistic backgrounds, marked by the speaker's referential choice of inclusive pronouns in "we try" and "our languages", are suggestive of shared affiliations between them. Explicit personal and emotional reasons for establishing friendships with the two Polish Erasmus students are justified by the speaker's positive evaluative stance towards the Polish

language, as illustrated in the opening claim "I like Polish very much". Being able to understand each other by conversing in their native languages is given a special status here, considering the context of study abroad, where usually the use of mother tongue is significantly reduced/ restricted and Erasmus students mostly resort to *lingua franca* English to communicate with each other. This is why, being able to communicate in the mother tongues and understand each other without resorting to *lingua franca* English, gives Jan and his friends similar status, while at the same time setting them apart from other Erasmus students, unable to understand or communicate in Polish.

6.1.2. Erasmus unity in diversity

The focus of this section is on the way Erasmus students question the meaning of *national* and *European identities* in the course of their stay abroad. This emerges as the result of constructing representations via reflection on similarities and differences between self and others, which allows the exchange students to organize their experiences and make sense of the socio-cultural incongruities and discrepancies that are characteristic of intercultural encounters.

Table 7: *Sub-topics* realising the *macro topic 'Erasmus unity in diversity'*

Sub-topic	**Number of occurrences**	**Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript**
Erasmus unity in diversity	5	A: 103-115; L.:683-686; An.:1039-1044/ 1047-1052; Ard.: 1133-1142 Br.: 1364-1368
Stereotyping (Making sense of differences)	3	Spanish fiesta (Li: 727-730); "Typical Portuguese" (Kat 2266-2275); Poles are thieves (Ka: 2136-2146; Kat.: 2275-2280)

6.1.2.1 ‘European village’:

6:

(a) You know, we have a lot of people from a lot of nationalities, from different countries. For example, my best friends are from Germany, from Poland, from Slovenia and from Portugal. And I’m Hungarian. If you put it on the map, I think it’s almost the whole Europe. And we speak a lot about own countries, we are listening to Polish music, to Hungarian music, to Portuguese music and I think it’s a good thing, because we can show a lot of things to each other.

(Ann, 1039-1044)

(b) It’s on daily basis it’s gives you such *European village* – there is a phrase “global village” and in it you meet Erasmus students in your lectures and it gives you a kind of feeling that you are not, except lecturers, of course, who are locals, in the lecture, you see everyone is from a different country and everybody is speaking the same language, English, it gives you a very European feeling - “European village”. [...] If you see Czechs and Spanish and Italians and Portuguese and so on – [...], we are all in the small room, country but we are living in a much bigger way.

(Ardi, 1133-1142)

The context of student mobility is set here by Ardi’s reference to the “European village”, which interdiscursively relates to the popular concept of “the global village”. Namely, it implies that the Erasmus programme brings together young people from across Europe (and beyond) to study and interact with each other, whereby lifting imaginary and physical borders between Europeans and allowing for the formation of affiliations between them. The implications of the Erasmus experience are constructed as many-fold and reaching beyond the actual seemingly short-lived study abroad experience. This is referenced in “we are all in the small room, country but we are living in a much bigger way”. The quantification, “much bigger way”, suggests that the implications of the cognitive and existential experience of the different Europeans, has significant and large-scale (“global”) implications, reaching beyond the limits of the “small room”, the physical immediate setting. Thus, the experience of Erasmus togetherness is the experience of the world becoming smaller, more accessible, proximate, while the transformations that take place in the course of study abroad have significant, far-reaching implications for individuals and society at large.

This supranational experience makes Ardi and Ann question the construction of *identity* by making “nationality” a salient category. For instance, Ann asserts her national affiliation by

acknowledging *national diversity* as something that characterises Erasmus students, as in "…my best friends are from Germany, from Poland, from Slovenia and from Portugal. And I'm Hungarian". This diversity characteristic of Erasmus community is also illustrated by reference to the "map", a visualisation of physical distance between the Erasmus students. However, Ann changes the framing of her discourse by saying, "If you put it on the map, I think it's almost the whole Europe". This, points to a change in Ann's discourse from a more *narrow*/local understanding of individuals based on their nationality as a category of difference ("German, Czech, etc."), towards a *broader*/ more *global* one, in which the international community of Erasmus students are represented by their shared affiliation with Europe ("almost the whole Europe").

It seems that both Ann and Ardi come to understand differences among the Erasmus students as "unity in diversity"[48]. Particularly, this is achieved via the strategies of emphasis or presupposition of sameness (*strategies of assimilation*) and difference (*strategies of dissimilation*), realised through the *topos of comparison*, which gets its persuasive force from a comparison that stresses the resemblances between Erasmus students. Despite being representatives of different national communities, Erasmus students have a similar status in the host country (mobile students), speaking *lingua franca* English and with regard to their affiliation/ identification with Europe, "you see everyone is from a different country and everybody is speaking the same language, English, it gives you a very European feeling". Here, the speaker *intensifies* his argumentation by contrasting different origins of Erasmus students, "from different country" and shared means of communication, "the same language, English". Unity is also constructed here by omitting the earlier national categorisation (polytonyms/ geonyms) and using generic pronouns "everyone" and "everybody" instead. Also, as a consequence of sharing a linguistic code, the speaker extends the implications of this behaviour

[48] Reference to the EU motto.

to an affective "the European feeling", which also suggests the affiliation with Europe, pointing to the emerging sense of "European belonging" (Papatsiba, 2006) and potential process of "European integration".

Ann too makes an explicit reference to "European integration" among the Erasmus community. This is apparent in her choice of inclusive pronouns, "we speak", "we are listening" and "we can show…" in reference to the way that Erasmus students interact as a community, as they introduce each other to different elements of their *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986), such as music from their home country, despite the language that others, presumably, are not able to understand. Thus, differences among Erasmus students do not divide but bring them closer together by boosting their curiosity to learn about others and to share elements of their own cultural and linguistic practices. The speaker marks this type of intercultural learning as a mutually enriching process, "we can show a lot of things to each other". Erasmus is constructed here as a community of nationally and culturally diverse individuals that is open to learning and promoting a better understanding of national and cultural practices among the fellow Europeans.

6.1.2.2. 'Imagined communities'

Although Erasmus students appear to be open and willing to learn about different 'Others', making sense of the intercultural differences or incongruities in behaviour between themselves and others at times causes a challenge, leading the mobile students to resort to concrete recognisable categories (often stereotypes).

7:

(a)

> […] I have understood that Portuguese, for instance, eat very late, that from the Western point of view they are lazy and always sleep very late and I see that "typical Portuguese" are very laid back. And the Portuguese people in our dormitory get on very well with the Georgians – maybe it's their similar lifestyle that helps them understand each other better?! And another example is the Hungarian girl at our dormitory, who likes to study a lot. She always argues with the Portuguese guy. She likes him, but they come from different cultures and they are very different. They can sit till late hours and

> discuss what could be the possible cultural differences between them and why they constantly misunderstand each other.
>
> (Katarzyna, 2266-2275)

(b)

> Also what they thought about Poland, what types of stereotypes they have. No, actually I knew, even when I was in Poland, I knew what kind of stereotypes that other countries have about Poland, so I wasn't surprised. Some of them yes, but a lot of them are not true. Some are bad. For example, for German people, Polish people are those who steal everything, who damage a lot. Not good, kind of ashamed… yeah… Probably when you go through Poland you can find it… Yeah….Yeah, sure…. If you had not come here… studying from TV, books, Internet is not the same then when you are experiencing it yourself, meeting these people.
>
> (Kasia, 2136-2146)

Mobile students tend to resort to stereotyping or "intercultural imagination" (Devin, 2007), by means of "in-group" (auto-stereotypes) and "out-group" categorisations (hetero-stereotypes, related to the "other" Bar Tal, 1997), which provide "easy" explanations for observed behaviours. By creating representations (Moscovici, 1984) of others, Erasmus students are able to categorise and "box" their experiences, creating a recognisable reality. This tendency is characterised by an *argumentation strategy* using *the topos of definition* and/or *the topos of name interpretation,* when by naming a national group, the speakers construct "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991), as in "'typical Portuguese' are very laid back". This resembles what Reisigl & Wodak (2001:20) refer to as "the basic form of stereotypes", as such a construction forms "a specific analytical judgement", where the predicate ("laid back") ascribed to the subject ("typical Portuguese") suggests an intrinsic essential and inherent characteristic of a whole group.

When Katarzyna constructs a *hetero-stereotype* based on the *topos of definition* of a "typical Portuguese", she adopts a distant stance to make an assertion about the traits of the Portuguese, embedding her initial claim through interdiscursive reference to a popular opinion in the West, "from the Western point of view, they are lazy and always sleep very late". Katarzyna distances herself from the proposition by taking the *footing of an animator* (Goffman, 1981), as she claims that these are not her words/views exactly but those "of the West", adopting an impersonal position. She constructs the argument by invoking the opinion

of a much larger grouping that backs the claim with authority, while making Katarzyna's stance ambiguous. Ambiguity and a distant stance are also used to construct the boundary between herself and "the Portuguese", especially when issuing criticism. It becomes noticeable in Katarzyna's *referential* choice of deixis "they" when making an analytical proposition and attributing negative evaluative predicates "lazy" and "always sleep very late", ascribed to "the Portuguese". By shifting the footing back to *author*, with the deictic "I" and the verb of perceptive process "see", Katarzyna takes authority to mark her own positive analytical proposition in "and I see that typical Portuguese are very laid back".

Having established "the definition" of the Portuguese, Katarzyna goes on to draw out the cultural differences and similarities that she has observed. She claims *similarity* in lifestyle to be the reason for good understanding between the Portuguese and the Georgians. However, the *differences* between "the Portuguese guy" and "the Hungarian girl" are likely to be caused by their distinct cultural affiliations. In her argumentation, Katarzyna resorts to the *topos of culture*, drawing on the following scheme: because the culture of Portuguese/ Hungarians is different, problems of misunderstanding arise in specific situations. Katarzyna constructs "culture" as a salient feature of individual's national identity, which is determined by social actor's belonging to "an imagined community". Also, in her discourse *culture* is constructed via two types of processes: *socio-cognitive process,* requiring acceptance and recognition of someone's cultural identity, implied by the mental verb "understand"; and a *discursive process* involving the construction and negotiation of cultural identities in discourse, alluded to by the verbal processes "argue" and "discuss".

While Katarzyna primarily engages with *hetero-stereotypes*, Kasia constructs the *auto-stereotypes* of the Poles (her compatriots). Kasia attempts to challenge the existing "negative representations" of her compatriots by resorting to *the topos of name-interpretation* and drawing on the following argumentation scheme: *If the given national group is Polish, they*

should carry the negative qualities/traits/attributes. She attempts to adopt a neutral stance here by saying "some of them, yes, but a lot of them are not true" marked by her choice of unspecified determiner "some" together with the use of vague deixis "them", leaving it open-ended what negative representations are implied here and from whose perspective they are attributed. Having acknowledged that only some stereotypes are true, Kasia uses intensification "a lot of them are not true", thereby challenging the negative representations.

Kasia attempts to establish positive representations of the Poles and find a justification for the criticism that she assumes exists among other nations (e.g., Germans). To illustrate her point and to gain authority, she changes her footing from *author*, marked by repeated use of first person pronoun "I" to *principal*, via reference to "German people" and the specific stereotype that they have of the Poles as "thieves". This allows Kasia to distance herself from the criticism, which is further noticeable as omission of the referent when listing the negative evaluative descriptors "bad", "not good", "ashamed", implicit in the speaker's affective stance towards the negative representation of her compatriots.

In what follows, Kasia not only tones down the negative representation of her compatriots via the mitigating adverb "probably", but also draws attention to the difference between "intercultural imagination" (Dervin, 2007) and the actual individuals who live in Poland. "Intercultural imagination", as Kasia suggests, is the outcome of the representations promoted via various forms of media (i.e., internet, books, TV). However, the actual experience of meeting the individuals, allegedly in the course of the Erasmus programme, is likely to challenge students' pre-existing representations. The context of Erasmus student mobility is referenced by a different contextual frame, marked by spatial deixis "here" ("If you had not come *here*…"), while another spatial deixis "these" ("meeting *these* people") is suggestive of proximity to the Poles that Erasmus offers, allowing her to compare the pre-existing representations to the actual individual representative of that national group.

6.1.3. Signs of difference (among Erasmus students)

Identity work takes place when an individual engages in reflection on similarities and differences between *self and others* or between the *in-group(-s)* as opposed to *out-groups* (Wodak et al., 2009), irrespective of the criteria chosen for the comparison. Throughout the interviews, two types of sub-themes emerged where Erasmus students pointed to their difference, singling themselves out from other Erasmus exchange students on the basis of: 1) familiarity with/belonging to the host country/ community; 2) having academic/social focus as regards their stay abroad as opposed to being "a party type". These sub-topics are schematically represented in Table 8 below:

Table 8: *Sub-topics* realising *the macro topic Signs of Difference among Erasmus students.*

Sub-topic	Number of occurrences	Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript
Nationality/ethnicity as a sign of difference	3	Al. 103-109; Kri.: 192-198; An.: 838-840
"Excessive" partying and drinking as opposed to partying and socialising – self	5	Li.:652-664; Ard.: 1169-1173; Chi.: 1459-1462; Jo.: 1882-1889; J. 1791-1792;)

6.1.3.1. Familiarity with the Host Country/Community:

8:

(a) I guess it's a different question for me than for most, because I'm Latvian, so I have been exposed to Latvian my whole life, and I guess…Well, yes, mostly my relatives and some of my friends are Latvian and I've been to Latvian fraternity events, where they would be like singing Latvian Christmas songs and there would be a Latvian Santa Claus and we would eat Latvian food and … I never I wasn't sent to the language courses as a child, unfortunately but and even still there is a pretty big Latvian community in Toronto.

(Kristina, 192-108)

(b) […] it won't be a surprise for me because I come from Eastern Europe state, I know homeless people, I know trash on streets, I know what kind of public transport we have and it's the same here, so it wasn't a cultural shock for me.

(Anna, 838-840)

Even though the reasons for familiarity with the host country that are given in 8 differ, both speakers make references to their supra-/national identities in relation to the host country, thereby drawing boundaries between themselves and other Erasmus students. Discursively, this is achieved by means of the *strategy of dissimilation/exclusion*, suggesting that Erasmus students are impaired compared to "us", referring to speaker's exclusive status in relation to the host country/community.

For instance, Kristina constructs her ethnic identity as a Latvian by singling herself out from the rest of the Erasmus students. The personal referent "me", alluding to the speaker, is contrasted with the Erasmus students, marked via the elliptic referent "most" in "it's a different question for me than for most, because I'm Latvian". The reference to the speaker's *ethnic identity*, "I'm Latvian", implicitly marks her in-group status and contextualises her footing, positioning her as a legitimate member of the host community, rather than a temporary visitor, or " passing stranger" (Dervin, 2011:72), as the other Erasmus students are allegedly.

The speaker's *ethnic identity* is further intensified by references to her social network, which includes "the native network" (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). This includes her Latvian family and friends, as well as her affiliation with the Latvian diaspora in Canada. She signals

this identification by using an *argumentation strategy* and the *topos of numbers* with reference to the size of the Latvian diaspora in her home town: "there is a *pretty big* Latvian community in Toronto". To justify her affiliation with the Latvian community, Kristina resorts to the *topos of culture*, claiming that she is familiar with it because of her native-like engagement with different aspects of Latvian culture (Latvian celebrations, food, songs), intensified by emphatic temporal marker "my whole life", emphasising its continuity and significance in her life.

However, at the same time, Kristina implies that she does not speak Latvian, which is an important aspect of ethnic identity, as it allows or withholds access to a specific ethnic group. This is particularly true of the current situation in Latvia, where language is generally treated as the marker of ethnic identity (Schmid, 2008). Although the existing research is inconclusive with regard to the relationship between the role of language in ethnic identity (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009), it is often suggested that only proficiency in the Heritage Language allows "complete access" to the ethnic group (You, 2005). Kristina may be aware of this, as she *mitigates* the fact that she does not speak Latvian by toning down her responsibility in the agentless passive construct "I wasn't sent to the language courses as a child", followed by a negative evaluative "unfortunately".

Unlike Kristina, Anna constructs an alignment with the host country by making references to her identity as an Eastern-European in: "I come from Eastern European state". By establishing similarity with regard to the socio-cultural context of the host country, compared to her home country, Anna sets the discourse frame characterising her experience as an Erasmus student and asserting her *supra-national* identity. She achieves this by constructing sameness/similarity between Eastern Europeans based on common culture, possibly common past and a common present, implicit of *the topos of history* (i.e., shared cultural traditions and similar social models). Anna continues to construct her claim as she points out *similar* negative features alluding to both the home and the host country, "I know homeless people, I know trash

on streets, I know what kind of public transport we have and it's the same here". Such salient social issues signalling poverty as "homelessness", the state of the streets and allegedly "public transport" are used to establish Ann's familiarity, which is intensified through the repetition of "I know".

Beside the similarities, Anna also establishes her *supra-national identity* by alluding to the *difference* of her experience compared to that of others. She achieves this via an *intensification strategy*, realised by the repetition of disclaimers at the start and at the end of the utterance, "it won't be a surprise for me…" and "so it wasn't a cultural shock for me". Thereby, Anna singles out her individual experience of student mobility, inferring that it is different from other, non-Eastern European Erasmus students, who may be surprised by what they observe and experience a culture shock.

The analysis of these extracts suggests that both speakers engage in establishing an alignment with the host environment. Their individual histories and other identities become more salient and have an impact on the way they construct themselves and the new experiences as distinct from those of others. While for Kristina, her ethnic identity becomes more salient, for Anna it is her supra-national identity that emerges from observing similarities between the host and the home countries.

6.1.3.2. Party-goers vs. Academically-minded

In (9) below, the speakers establish their identities as Erasmus students by setting themselves apart from others, assuming *positive self-presentation* against evaluative other presentation by resorting to *the strategy of transformation* through *the topos of difference*. It appears from the three extracts in (9) that interviewees become aware that their identities are context-bound and a matter of conscious choice and/or manipulation. In their accounts the interviewees construct two settings: "home" and "host country", where the former connotes

permanence and stability, while the latter is representative of change and difference. Thus, having arrived in the host country, Erasmus students' life and behaviour are bound to be different from what it is/was like before. However, this appears to be a matter of individual variation and the goals (social or academic) that exchange students set for themselves prior to the exchange.

9.

(a) I am really trying to be the same person but maybe it's not always working, because in my home country I wasn't like a party person, and here not also… not too much. And a lot of my friends said that they don't drink so much in their home country and they drink here a lot and I really don't like to drink a lot so I'm trying to be the same person. Yeah, I think that I didn't come here to party or something like that, but I came here with my own vision, with what I want to do here, so I think I am basically the same person. I still have my goals and aims and dreams. Others, they are different when they are drunk. […] Sometimes it's nice but sometimes you get tired of that of all this, I don't know, noise and you want privacy – go to my room, be on my own. (Lissi, 646-664)

(b) Yeah so maybe I thought it would be more different to what I'm used to being at home. Of course it would be if I liked all those parties, but these are not the things I like to do. At the moment it's more like doing stuff for university and getting things done and yeah and at the moment I'm getting the feeling of how to manage things.

(Johannes, 1882-1889)

(c) If my main aim would have been to have fun and enjoy Erasmus life, then I would have definitely stayed at the dormitory, but my aim was to research and to study and to make some kind of connection with the Latvian university for the future and that's why I chose to live by myself not to get distracted. You can't fully concentrate on your work then.
(Ardi 1169-1173)

Lissi shows her awareness and the arbitrary nature of change in behaviour as the result of entering a new context in: "I am really trying to be the same person". While trying to convince herself of the continuity and stability of self, the speaker appears to be torn between "sameness" (related to the past, being in the home country) and "difference" (associated with the new encounters and experiences in the host country). Here, Lissi observes the *instability* of self in others, which she constructs by changing her footing from the *author* to *animator*, as she gives voice to "her friends". She claims that Erasmus students reinvent themselves by adopting a "different self" (changing their behaviour), which are Erasmus context-bound "[…]a

lot of my friends said that they don't drink so much in their home country and they drink here a lot".

Lissi shows her disapproval by maintaining that even though other Erasmus students act differently, of this by remaining unchanged, true to her "fixed identity", staying the same as before (in her home country): "I really don't like to drink a lot so I'm trying to be the same person." To illustrate her point, she discusses "the brought along identity", preceding the exchange in "I came here with my own vision", suggestive of her desire to construct a stable self. However, Lissi is cautious of the difficulty of maintaining a stable identity. This becomes apparent in her use of *mitigation* as a disclaimer "but maybe it's not always working". Besides, Lissi indicates that her identity can be manipulated (e.g., "trying to be the same person") through active and conscious means.

In what follows, the theme of excessive *partying* in reference to the Erasmus student community appears in all three extracts. It is constructed somewhat disapprovingly and interviewees make an emphatic differentiation by singling themselves out from the rest of Erasmus community. Lissi and Johannes resort to *referential strategies*, resulting in construction of *positive self vs. negative other*. For instance, Lissi *intensifies* her claim to being different, marking her boundaries and directing her criticism towards the behaviour of Erasmus students via a disclaimer "I didn't come here to party". A similar stance is adopted by Johannes in "if I liked all those parties…[my life would have been different in the host country], but these are not the things I like to do", presupposing that other Erasmus students do like and participate in parties, whereas he does not.

Also, Ardi marks the boundaries between himself and the Erasmus community when he justifies his choice of accommodation. He indirectly contrasts his own behaviour with that of Erasmus students as a group via the *topos of comparison*, realised by conditional "if my main aim would have been to have fun and enjoy Erasmus life, I would have stayed at exchange

student accommodation", implicitly alluding to excessive partying and lack of seriousness towards academic achievements among Erasmus students. In so doing he also creates *a positive representation of self*, as a mature and pragmatic individual, who goes beyond the common option of staying together with other exchange students: "my aim was to research and to study". He expresses embedded criticism (*negative other* presentation) directed towards the Erasmus community's short-term-ism and hedonism.

6.1.4. Language, performativity and situated identities

Having entered the host country, Erasmus students also enter a new linguistic environment, where they are immersed in the local language(s). As a result, their use of mother tongue(s) becomes restricted, usually to the environments where they speak with other co-nationals and/or other Erasmus students who speak their mother tongue (if any). The change in their habitual linguistic environment makes Erasmus students reflect on the impact of different language(s) use on their behaviour and (re-)/construct the representations of "self".

Table 9: *Sub-topics* realising *the macro topic Performativity and situated identities*

Sub-topic	**Number of occurrences**	**Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript**
Switching languages - switching allegiances	5	N.:523-529; L.: 559-562; An.: 959-970; Ard.: 1239-1263; Ja.: 1779-1784

10:

(a) […] so, at home, I am speaking my native language, so I am acting completely different than here. And here I speak English, so I am also acting differently, even so... also the feeling of different environment, how secure... here, for example, you have to be more... more alert, in general[…]But different behaviour comes from which language you use. It's... you start thinking English, you behave like English, you start speaking Latvian, you start thinking Latvian, you start speaking Estonian, you start thinking Estonian, so you construct different thoughts, because the words and expressions are different... [...]In English, I feel also, that I am different also, I don't feel like an Estonian, it makes you more a *cosmopolite*. You are thinking, when you talk in English, and English is your main language, than immediately you start looking for signs in English, the information in English, everything in English.

(Ardi, 1239-1253)

(b) Because if I met with my friends we would talk totally differently. I think I am a bit different, I do, because behaviour, I think is connected with language, so I think in English I behave differently. I just feel sometimes more free in English – it's such an easy language to express all the clichés – because there are so many things in English I couldn't say in Czech because they would sound weird. (Jan, 1779-1784)

The key argument expressed by both speakers in (10) concerns their recognition of a close connection between *self-representation, context, language, thought* and *behaviour.* Ardi constructs two contextual frames, with the help of deixis ("here" to refer to the host country) and nominal forms ("at home", "different environment"), which shape the way he interprets social reality and adapts his behaviour to such interpretation: "I'm acting completely different than here". Movement between two geographical locations is accompanied by a linguistic shift between speaking Ardi's mother tongue (Estonian), speaking Latvian (the official language of the host country) and speaking *lingua franca* English, which has a noticeable impact on him. In what follows, Ardi constructs his self-representation with the help of conceptual metaphor of ACTING, echoing Goffman's (1959:70) "dramaturgical metaphor", where the context (*habitus*) informs the representation that individuals create for themselves and enact in discourse. Here, the metaphor of ACTING alludes to contextually-determined *situated identity*: "at home, I am speaking my native language, so I am acting completely different than here. And here I speak English, so I am also acting differently".

For Jan, language choice is also a matter of constructing a *situated identity*, "because there are so many things in English I couldn't say in Czech because they would sound weird." It is argued here that some themes are language-bound, as the speaker can only express them in English and not in his mother tongue, Czech. The choice of language for Jan determines the choice of the topic under discussion, his stance towards the claim(s) and *the situated identity* that he constructs in discourse. For him, language determines the moral/socio-psychological discourse boundaries between what is acceptable/comfortable, "easy" and what is not, marked by the negative evaluative, "weird".

Moreover, both Ardi and Jan, expand on the metaphor of ACTING, as they argue that language is closely connected with the representations that they have of different linguistic and national communities. Whenever they switch languages, they also switch alignments with the national communities whose language they speak. Ardi claims that he takes on the identity of the national group whose language he speaks, or implicitly ROLEPLAYS an "imagined community" by adopting their mental, verbal and behavioral patterns.

By switching languages, the individual can, with apparent ease, change alignments with national communities. Ardi, lists the transformations (e.g., "you start thinking English, you behave like English, you start speaking Latvian, you start thinking Latvian…"), implying the fluidity of identity and multiplicity of ROLES available to an individual when switching languages. This becomes particularly salient when Ardi refers to speaking English, as he even discards of his national identity. Ardi draws the boundaries and distances himself from his national community via *the topos of difference*, realized as a disclaimer "In English […] I don't feel like an Estonian". By asserting that speaking English makes him different, Ardi expands on his argument via *the topos of definition*, affirming that speaking English transforms his national affiliation from being and feeling Estonian and replaces it with a *supra-national identity* ("it makes you more a *cosmopolite*"), going beyond the national communities.

6.1.5. Situated identities

The situated nature of identities is further explored in this section. It appears that Erasmus experience prompted students to reflect and question their identities in redefining their new membership categorisation and its criteria.

Table 10: *Sub-topics* realising the *macro topic* '*Membership Categorisation'*

Sub-topic	Number of occurrences	Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript
ethnic identity	2	N.: 508-517; A.: 103-109;

national identity	3	Ka.:2113-2116; Kat.:2235-2243;Ul: 2653- 2660;
multiple/unstable identities	3	Ard: 1123-1132; Ka.: 2108-2116; Kat.2235-2243

11:

(a) I can't say that I'm not Polish anymore, because it is who I'm inside always, more like the international side of me has changed. I've also changed my mind, my opinion about, I could err… damage some theories, some opinions that I had before…

(Kasia, 2113-2116)

(b) To tell the truth, I never felt like being only from Poland, with the Polish identity, I always, I was always searching for my own place in the world and I know that maybe it's not in Riga, but there is always this place somewhere else in the world. So there is a more international identity in me, rather than just Polish. There is no place for me to which I belong, at least not now.

(Katarzyna, 2235-2243)

(c) Now that I'm in Latvia I feel more like German, because I'm so used to German customs, but in Germany I'm constantly comparing Germany and Russia and Uzbekistan. Well, when I talk about it with my boyfriend in Germany, I talk about myself as an Uzbekistani or Russian – it's very strange because when I'm here, I feel German. It's interesting I keep jumping back and forth, as if when it's more suitable for me, somehow, depending on the situation I opt for a more relevant identity: Russian or German. I don't know why…I compare myself more with a German or with a Russian woman when I talk to Russians, because I feel closer and what we have in common with them gets revealed...

(Alisa, 103-109)

For Kasia, *identity* is a matter of *personal allegiances* that she constructs in relation to her national/ ethnic community. She attributes to her *national identity* a quality of stability and continuity, as something intimate that is an integral part of her: "I can't say that I'm not Polish anymore, because it is who I'm inside always". She intensifies her stance via two disclaimers, reaffirming loyalty towards her national affiliation, which remains constant across time, implied by the temporal deixis, suggesting permanence ("always"). National identity is not only represented here as stable, but also as something that is private and intimate, invoked by conceptual metaphor of a CONTAINER. For Kasia, her national identity has a more protected and stable INSIDE, which stores her national/ethnic affiliation with Poland and may not be open or visible to others. However, on the OUTSIDE, the CONTAINER is exposed to change and the impact of interaction with various (international) communities.

Conversely, for Katarzyna, identity is not constructed in relation to a national community, but is *spatially situated*. This is achieved by drawing boundaries and distancing

herself from the home country via the marker of negation ("never") and a spatial marker (geonym "Poland"), as Katarzyna rejects the exclusivity of national affiliation: "never felt like being only from Poland". This claim is further intensified by a comparative "there is a more international identity in me", implicit of a *supra-national identity*, untied to a specific location, or a nation-state. Thus, the geographical boundaries of possible identities are expanded to an unspecified location, "my own place in the world", which focuses on Katarzyna's personal affective affiliation, rather than political allegiances or geographical boundaries. This extract is abundant in temporal deixis, such as "now" and "always", which situate her identity in the on-going search for her "own place".

For Alisa, unlike Katarzyna and Kasia, her national and ethnic identities are both *socially* and *spatially situated*. Alisa seems to construct identities based on her subjective interpretation of the context and social actors, inhabiting it. To construct her alignments, Alisa implicitly draws on a *perspectivation strategy,* devising membership categorisation based on such categories as sameness or difference, detachment or affiliation, distance or proximity towards the communities she refers to in her discourse (i.e., Germans and Russians/ Uzbeks).

Having set the contextual frame in the host country (Latvia), "Now that I'm in Latvia, I feel like German", Alisa establishes her affective alignment, marked by the verb of mental emotive process "feel", with the home country (Germany) by alluding to her national affiliation. It is constructed in contrast to the actual setting that she is in (the host country), marked by temporal ("now") and spatial deixis ("in Latvia"). Thus, despite acknowledging her physical presence in the host country, Alisa distances herself from the host country/community, while justifying the alignment with her home community, shared cultural and historical traditions - "because I'm so used to German customs" - implicit of *the topos of history* (Alisa's personal background).

National identity is not unproblematic for Alisa, who is bi-national. Having shifted the contextual frame to her home country, Alisa acknowledges that her national identity shifts too. Alisa marks the shift of contextual frame by means of a spatial marker, a geonym "in Germany" and identifying the social actor by relational reference to "my boyfriend". It is in relation to him that Alisa discursively aligns herself with the community of Russians or Uzbeks, "I talk about myself as an Uzbekistani or Russian". Yet, at the same time, she realises that identification as a Russian or Uzbek is inconsistent and contradicts her identification as a German that she becomes aware of while in the host country: "when I'm here, I feel German". The context, marked by spatial deixis "here", references the immediate setting of the host country, but at the same time implies a distant stance of the speaker, a stranger "here" (in Latvia), via the alignment that she assumes towards Germany.

Subsequently, Alisa seems to realise that her identity choice is not only contextually but also socially situated. Despite her German national identity being more prevalent in the host country, in the contexts where ethnic Russians are present, Alisa claims to affiliate with them: "I compare myself more with a German, or with a Russian woman when I talk to Russians". This claim also suggests that the identities that emerge are both *discursive*, implied by reference to the verbal process of "talk" and *emotive*, "feel[ing]" of affiliation towards a community with a shared national/ethnic identity, invoked by reference to such affective membership categories as proximity and similarity: "because I feel closer and what we have in common with them gets revealed".

Although identity is constructed differently by each Erasmus student referenced here, it appears that for all three of them identity is situated and constructed as a position in relation to various contexts (i.e., spatial, temporal and social).

In the following section Erasmus students' construction of self in reference to the locals will be discussed by analysing relevant extracts from the interviews.

6.2 Self and Locals

In previous student mobility research, as well as in the interviews with Erasmus students, it appears that exchange students remain marginalized from the local community for the duration of their stay, almost exclusively interacting with other Erasmus students. This has an impact on the representations of the locals that Erasmus students construct.

It became clear from the first pass through the interview data that in order to analyse the way identities are constructed and ascribed to self, compatriots and the locals, Wodak's (2002) "Meta strategy of Us vs. Them" is very useful, as it highlights positive self-representation" versus "negative other representation" that occurs in discourse and appears to be its dominant characteristic. Identity construction process involves discursive strategies and typically includes the following stages: *labelling* social actors into positive or negative attributes; then, *generalizing* the positive or negative attributes and *elaborating arguments to justify* the negative or positive attributes (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). In what follows, section 6.2.1 details the *negative characteristics of the locals* asserted in the student accounts against the *positive characteristics of compatriots* in section 6.2.2. This is followed by the reverse characterisations, *positive characteristics/traits of the locals* against the *negative features/characteristics of the compatriots*, as outlined in Table 11.

Table 11: *Sub-topics representing the macro topic 'Representations of Locals'.*

Sub-topic	Number of occurrences	Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript
Germans vs. Latvians (quality of life; politeness/university approach to studying; queuing and pushing)	3	A:145-150; 72-79; queuing Br 1296-1301; queuing and busy: Br 1334-1338
Latvians vs. Estonians (rudeness/politeness)	1	Li 582-588
Latvians vs. Italians (financial burdened/ feeling depressed)	1	Alf 745-750
Canadians vs. Latvians (responsible and hardworking locals/light-hearted and less responsible compatriots)	1	Kr 396-402

Germans/ Austrians vs. Latvians (stressed vs. relaxed; obsession with punctuality vs. flexibility);	2	Ul 2710-2721; 2562-2567
Poles vs. Latvians (*xenophiles* vs. *xenophobes*)	1	Ka: 2040-2044
Italians vs. Latvians (economic hardship/ being knowledgeable) Hungarians vs. Latvians (economic hardships)	2	Alf.: 745-748; An.: 846-855; 869-880

6.2.1. Negative Representations of the Locals

Rudeness

Three speakers considered Latvians rude/ unfriendly in their behaviour in comparison to their compatriots. However, at the same time, they also attempted to maintain a neutral stance by acknowledging the positive traits inherent in local behaviour.

12.

a) I haven't been disappointed but I think that…Yeah maybe not so happy, because of people, because they are different, because, I don't know, like Latvian and Russians, they are, compared to Estonians, they are more rude, like you have to make your way to the trolleybus and your way out by pushing – that's really different, but if you are at the market, they are really polite and maybe it depends on which region of Riga you are, on the other hand, they are so, *Move, Move*!
(Lissi, 582-588)

First, Lissi takes a distant and rather critical stance when discussing the locals, "yeah, maybe not so happy, because of people, because they are different…" She mitigates her stance with the litotes, "not so happy", implicit of 'being unhappy', while ascribing the responsibility for this to a vague referent "because of people". Thus, Lissi makes her criticism of the locals appear embedded by mitigating the illocutionary force of her claim about the locals being rude via the adverb "maybe" and a disclaimer, "I don't know", implicitly withdrawing her responsibility for the claim.

Lissi goes on to construct the locals by resorting to the macro strategy of transformation, *the topos of difference*, as she contrasts three national communities "Latvians and Russians" of the host country versus her compatriots "Estonians", indicating that there are differences between the three national/ethnic groups, marked by negative comparative "more rude". The

topos of difference is also supported by an illustrative example, "you have to make your way to the trolleybus and your way out by pushing". Here, Lissi makes a shift in her *footing* from the *author* to the *animator,* to gain credibility but also to distance herself as she describes the behaviour of the locals on the public transport. This is further developed via interdiscursivity, resorting to *direct reported speech*, "they are so, *Move, Move*!" to invoke and animate the voice and what she perceives to be the rude behaviour of the locals via an imperative command, devoid of politeness markers or personal forms of address.

In what follows, Lissi counters this by resorting to an illustration of the positive behaviour/traits of the locals in another setting, at the market: "but if you are at the market, they are really polite…" The positive trait of the locals - "really polite" - is intensified and contextually situated via spatial reference - "it depends on which region of Riga you are in" - implying spatially-determined heterogeneity of the locals. By shifting the contextual frame from the rude behaviour on public transport, she acknowledges that it is not universally true but restricted to some contexts (areas of Riga) and only some scenarios. Thereby, Lissi tones down her earlier criticism of the locals and adopts a more neutral stance.

Xenophobic

Only one speaker among the interviewees considered the attitudes of the locals towards foreigners as *xenophobic*. However, as this has been considered to be a common observation among mobile students in earlier studies of student mobility (see Coleman, 2006; Paptsiba, 2006; Dervin, 2007), it has also been selected for the analysis in this section.

13.

a) I don't know whether I can say about it, but they show in some services, people are not very friendly with foreigners and they are afraid or not afraid but angry that we are from another country. Yeah, because I know that in Poland, my experience, for example when someone speaks English, I know that the Polish people are even friendlier to the foreign persons than they are to the Polish person… I don't know… we very often talk about it with other Erasmus students, that the attitude to people who speak English is terrible… (Kasia, 2040-2044)

Kasia develops her argument centred around the discourse topic of attitudes towards foreigners among the locals and her compatriots. She issues criticism towards the locals for their *xenophobic* attitudes: "[…] they show in some services, people are not very friendly with foreigners and they are afraid or not afraid but angry that we are from another country." The discourse of hostility towards the "foreigners" is constructed through a range of negative evaluative characteristics used to describe the locals, such as "not very friendly", "afraid", "angry", all suggesting xenophobic tendencies.

The speaker adopts a detached stance towards representations of the locals, as she employs a range of mitigation strategies, allowing her to tone down the criticism of the locals, such as this addressee-oriented mitigation - "I don't know whether I can say about it…"- as well as a vague expression "in some services", negation "not very friendly" and self-correction "afraid or not afraid but angry". Such embeddedness may suggest Kasia's awareness of the presence of the interviewer, a local, and therefore she attempts to sound more balanced in her approach, rather than express direct criticism threatening the interviewer's face needs.

Kasia reasserts a more involved stance when she reflects on her compatriots, the Poles, who as she claims, in contrast to the locals are *xenophiles*: "[…] I know that in Poland, my experience, for example when someone speaks English, I know that the Polish people are even friendlier to the foreign persons than they are to the Polish person…" The speaker embeds her claim in the subjectivity of her stance, marked by affirmative "I know" and "my experience". The positive attitude to foreigners in her home country is intensified by resorting to emphatic adverb "even" and the comparative form "friendlier", implying preferential treatment of the foreigners, compared to the fellow countrymen. The argument draws on the *topos of name interpretation*, and can be paraphrased as the following conditional rule "if the person speaks English in Poland, s/he is foreign and, therefore, has to be treated well or better than other

compatriots". Thus, Kasia claims that, once in Poland, speaking English becomes synonymous with the "foreigner" status, granting preferential treatment.

However, in the host country, Kasia argues that the *topos of name interpretation* takes a different meaning. She argues that speaking English in Latvia triggers *xenophobia*: "the attitude to people who speak English is terrible". Attributing this criticism to the locals, Kasia bolsters her claim by suggesting it is not just her opinion but that all Erasmus students agree with this viewpoint. Thereby, she is aligning herself with this claim by switching her footing from *author* to *animator,* voicing other Erasmus students.

In what follows, the extracts from the interviews with Erasmus students who constructed positive representations of the locals will be analysed.

6.2.2. Positive representations of the locals

Educated and Knowledgeable

14.

a) I think that people here are really depressed, because they don't like it here, the Latvian people, they don't want to be here, they want to leave Latvia. Of course in Italy people are not so depressed, but because they don't need money like they do here, they are richer but they are ignorant.
(Alfonso, 745-748)

Alfonso assumes a definitive stance with regard to attributing fixed categories to both the locals and his compatriots via *the topos of definition/ topos of name-interpretation* of two "imagined communities". In drawing a comparison between the national groups, the Latvians and the Italians, he assumes a critical stance towards both communities, referenced by the choice of vague personal pronoun "they", used to denote the membership within each community, referencing the 'imagined communities'.

The speaker marks the locals with the help of the spatial deixis "here", attributing them with a negative evaluative trait "really depressed", as opposed to his compatriots, who are

marked by spatial reference -“in Italy” –and in the affirmative: “in Italy people are not so depressed”. The compatriots are also portrayed by reference to binary terms (e.g., depressed vs not-depressed; rich vs. poor, etc.).

Having attributed descriptive labels to both communities, Alfonso goes on to justify his point of view. It is through this comparison that he issues explicit criticism of his own compatriots, while implicitly praising the locals (Latvians) for their “being educated and knowledgeable”, despite the financial hardships. In “they don’t like it here, the Latvian people, they don’t want to be here, they want to leave Latvia”, the speaker builds his argumentation based on the *topos of reality* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001:75) by creating a grim setting by means of repeated negation “don’t like it here”, “don’t want to be here” to describe the reactions of the locals towards the present economic situation in their home country. Therefore Alfonso implicitly creates an “imagined community” of Latvians, whose voices and wishes are assumingly *ventriloquated* through him in a single claim, justifying the principal wish of the locals, “they want to leave Latvia”, resembling *the fallacy of hasty generalization*, when the speaker makes generalizations about the characteristics attributed to a whole national group without any ‘real’ evidence.

In contrast to the hardships of the locals, the speaker’s compatriots are constructed as facing ‘intellectual’, rather than financial hardships, “but because they don’t need money like they do here, they are richer but they are ignorant.” The speaker insinuates that even though Italians do not experience financial difficulties of the same degree as the Latvians, they are inferior with regards to their intelligence. The *positive locals* versus *negative compatriots* construction is reinforced in a-reference to the locals; the speaker first suggests the superiority of Italians over Latvians by comparative wealth, though immediately rejecting it by issuing an explicit criticism, and labelling of his own compatriots with a negative evaluation of ignorance (“ignorant”). Thus, even though the speaker starts off by ascribing a negative characteristic to

the locals, later in the claim it appears to be used to issue praise and to criticise his own compatriots.

Hard-working and serious

To construct her positive representation of the host community, in 15, Kristina draws on her bi-national (Canadian/Latvian) status.

15.
I find that it's a hard-working society, like my nephew has to do so much homework, even though he is only eight. If I was babysitting an eight-year-old in Canada, then I would be like, playing games and stuff, playing soccer, but with him I have to… it's not so much that he is serious, it's also what his parents expect from him and what the school expects from him. And I know that he's gotten into trouble at school when he was playing when it was time to work and his parents said that the teachers think that he doesn't take school seriously enough, yet when I'm babysitting him or take him out to take lunch… He says, *Ok, I've got to go to study now, to master English homework*, and all kinds of stuff like that, so and also he washes all the dishes himself and if I try washing them, then he will say, *No*. And there is just this expectation that the child should wash the dishes and it's the opposite of what's it like in Canada, where the children are very free and wild and if they are being babysat, they will look at it as an opportunity to go wild, like go completely wild, jump on the babysitter, not wash any dishes and be very difficult.
(Kristina, 300-312)

As Kristina had family members living in Latvia, she drew on her personal experiences of interaction with the locals to construct her argumentation. She focused on the positive characteristics of the locals, in contrast to her compatriots (the Canadians) by drawing on *the topos of definition*, realised via the following argumentation scheme, "national group X has Y characteristic features". This topos emerges as the starting point for Kristina's assertion of the positive characteristics of the Latvians: "I find that it's a hard working society". Positive evaluative "hard working" is used as a category to describe/define a broad social group of Latvians. To illustrate her claim and express her involvement, Kristina refers to a personal example of a family relation, a hard-working eight-year old boy (her nephew). The positive characteristics in describing her nephew suggest his maturity, despite his young age, ("even though he is only eight"), intensified by an emphasising particle "only" and a conjunction "even though", claiming that this amount of work is excessive for someone his age. To authenticate her claim, Kristina changes her footing from *author* to *animator*, by enacting the boy's own

words via direct speech, "*Ok, I've got to go to study now, to master English homework*". The direct reporting conveys the boy's sense of duty and responsibility, which in reference to homework is marked by the modal verb of obligation "have got to".

The sense of obligation implied here is also echoed by reference to familial and institutional contextual frames in "what his parents expect from him and what the school expects from him". The familial and institutional expectations towards studying/working are introduced via double interdiscursivity, as Kristina voices the boy's parents reproducing the teachers' criticism in "his parents said that the teachers think that he doesn't take school seriously enough". The use of interdiscursivity here, by adopting a footing of the animator, allows Kristina to take a more distant stance towards discussing her nephew, while constructing the stance of his parents and teachers. Their stance regarding the boy's lack of seriousness towards his studies conflicts with Kristina's observations of her nephew as responsible and willing to do his homework as well as the household chores (washing up). Kristina's praise of the boy's maturity and industriousness is intensified by pronouns "all" and "himself" to emphasise his independence (in "he washes *all* the dishes *himself*"). This adds to Kristina's construction of her nephew in positive terms and serves as a justification for *the topos of definition* of Latvians as hard-working.

In what follows, Kristina situates her argument by juxtaposing a Latvian boy and a hypothetical Canadian eight-year old that she constructs by resorting to a fictitious scenario, marked by a conditional clause "If I was babysitting an eight-year-old in Canada". The norms of behaviour and expectations relating to children are used to contrast the two imagined communities (Latvians and Canadians), referencing their dissimilarity. In her representation of Canadian children, Kristina resorts to the metaphor of ANIMALS, implying children's unrestricted freedom and absence of boundaries. Similar to the behaviour of animals, Canadian children are constructed as "very free and wild and if they are being babysat, they will look at

it as an opportunity to go wild, like go completely wild, jump on the babysitter", . Kristina adopts an evaluative stance towards the excess of the Canadian children's uncivilised behaviour, implicit here in her use of emphasising particles "very" and "completely". She further highlights the differences between the two national communities implicit in her disapproval of the behaviour of Canadian children via the fact that they do "not wash any dishes", followed by a further negative evaluation of their behaviour as "very difficult", in contrast to that of her Latvian nephew.

Resemblances

The next speaker outlines resemblances between her compatriots and the host community.

16.
I think Austrians and Latvians are not so far from each other! Yes, we have different history… but in Latvia you get that feeling that if you talk to people you may get to your aim faster than just by following the procedures and that's the same in Austria. And people are more laid back here and people are more laid back in Austria… (Ulrieke, 2710-2721)

Constructing a representation of two national communities (the Latvians and the Austrians), Ulrieke first acknowledges the potential differences that exist between the two communities. She does that by allusion to the different histories of the two national communities via the reference to *the topos of history*, in "Yes, we have different history". With the affirmative "yes", used to acknowledge that history may have taught the two communities different lessons, Ulrieke positions herself on equal terms in relation to both communities via the inclusive pronoun "we". Her stance is also bolstered by her familiarity with both communities.

Despite their different past, Ulrieke tones down the dissimilarities between the two national communities. This is realised via the conceptual metaphor of SPACE, "I think Austrians and Latvians are not so *far* from each other". Here, Ulrieke makes claims about both the physical and symbolic distance between the two communities by resorting to a disclaimer that the

distance between them is rather short - “not so far”. Thus, the rejection of distance denotes close PROXIMITY (similarity) between the two national communities.

In what follows, she alludes to similarities between the two communities. Ulrieke states that, in the imagined communities of the two nations, both populations have the same traits. She drops the national labels and replaces them with a generic collective label, “people”: “people are more laid back here and people are more laid back in Austria”. An unspecified referent “people” here acts as a generic label, implying similarity and equal status between the communities, irrespective of their national affiliations. The *similarities* between the behavioural norms are constructed via the causal topos (*the topos of consequence*): “if you talk to people, you may get to your aim faster than just by following the procedures and that’s the same in Austria.” Thus, Ulrieke uses the causal *topos of consequence* to argue that personal contact and flexibility prevail over bureaucracy in both countries.

The next section looks at the way Erasmus students construct identities for themselves in communication with their compatriots.

6.3 Self and Compatriots

In this section, Erasmus students spoke about their compatriots, primarily focusing on the relations and the role of contact with their friends from home during their stay abroad.

Table 12: *Sub-topics representing the macro topic friends from home:*

Sub-topic	Number of occurrences	Speaker's name abbreviation/ Line in transcript
Capturing and sharing images of the immediate environment via *social networks*	3	Chi: 1477-1482; Ja 1827-1838 (via *MySpace, Facebook,* etc.); Li:651; Li 707-710 (*Skype*, etc.)
Criticism of the choice of mobility	4	Li:711-722; Jo 1943-1947; Ard 1130-1132; Ul: 2718-2719

6.3.1. Constructing 'virtual identities'

Some of the students admitted the importance of keeping in touch with their friends via *Skype* (internet telephony) and *Facebook* (social network), while being abroad.

17.

(a) [...] It's very important for me that my friends from home are still in touch with me trying to get to know what am I doing and how am I doing, really supported me very much because not many people from my community have been somewhere or many of my friends are about to go. For my friends it is amazing to get the information from me and it is very important for me that I am still important for them even though I am abroad, because that means they are good friends. They laugh at my stories and they can because I am very known for not being able to take good care of myself, so they are wondering how can I survive … And they always laugh at me because I always take pictures of my food and it's always very weird things […] (Jan, 1829-1837)

(b) I have uploaded some pictures on the *Facebook*, to show my Japanese friends, so they can see how I live here and they send me messages: *Oh, you look so happy there*! Just, when I talk to my friends on *Skype* or *Facebook* and I tell them that I am really happy here and I can speak some Latvian and Russian now and everything is so cheap and they say: *Oh, it's nice, for you! Latvia is good for you*! (Chie, 1476-1482)

For Jan, staying in touch with friends left behind becomes an important source of comfort and reassurance during their stay abroad, referenced by the temporal marker "still" in "it is important for me that I'm still important for them", which points to the continuity of already existing friendships, despite crossing the geographical borders and being physically absent from the home country. It is also suggested here that keeping in touch while away from

home puts friendships to the test. This is supported by *the topos of definition* of "a good friend", which Jan constructs in the form of a claim "if a person (a group of persons) is named *a good friend*, this person (group of persons) should take interest in their friend's life". Jan implies here that friendship is based on the continuity of mutual interest and engagement with each other's life.

Thus, the importance of maintaining contact with friends from home transpires through continued expression of interest towards Jan, referenced by interrogatives "what" and "how" with regard to what Jan does while living abroad. Sharing his reflections with friends seems to serve several functions, one of which is making sense of the new experiences and situating his identity in the new context. Namely, owing to the experience of student mobility, Jan positions himself as *different* (one of the few who has studied abroad) compared to his friends, who are *sedentary* or only planning to study abroad, "not many people from my community have been somewhere". His distinct status as a mobile individual is intensified via micro mitigation "not many" in reference to the lack of experience of living abroad among Jan's compatriots, and an emphatic adjective "amazing", referencing his friends' general disposition towards his stories of mobility.

Another function that the communication with friends from home serves for Jan is gaining friends' recognition and approval for choosing to study abroad. Both Jan and Chie construct a *positive self-representation* and claim their own success by drawing on the *topos of usefulness/advantage* of the Erasmus programme. For instance, Jan claims the positive impact of student mobility by reference to having become more independent and responsible, in contrast to his 'previous self', assuming that he lacked these qualities, marked by the negative "not being able to take good care of myself". The paralinguistic response of Jan's friends ("they *laugh* at my stories") suggests a degree of disbelief with regard to his transformation. His friends' reservations about Jan's ability to cope with the new context and its challenges are

intensified by reference to the conceptual metaphor of SURVIVAL, implicit in the embedded rhetorical question "they are wondering how can I survive". Jan backs up his earlier claim of *positive self-representation* and responds to his friends' doubts about his ability to SURVIVE by performing his new/ transformed identity. He does it via another semiotic mode, by posting pictures of food that he has prepared, as a way of instant communication, claiming that he can provide himself with food, therefore SURVIVE. Even though, Jan remains sceptical about his cooking skills, marked by intensification particle "very" and negative evaluative "weird" (in "it's always very weird things…"). Nevertheless, it seems that he uses the photos of unusual food that he has cooked to promote his 'changed persona', as well as gain acknowledgement from his friends for being different from the "norm", also as regards his cooking/eating.

Another Erasmus student, Chie, also strives for recognition among her friends as well as their approval of her choice of student mobility. Her messages (as she claims in the interview) are primarily constructed by means of virtual communication with her friends via *Skype* and *Facebook*. Chie creates a *positive self-representation* that she constructs discursively and indexically by posting photos online. Her claim "I tell them that I am really happy here and I can speak some Latvian and Russian now" is spatially and temporally situated in the present context of student mobility and references life in the host country via deixis "here" and "now". It is within this contextual frame that Chie builds on the causal argumentation scheme via the *topos of advantage/usefulness* of student mobility, which can be paraphrased as the following conditional "if the gains of student mobility are useful, one should engage in it (student mobility)". Chie illustrates this by intensifying the positive impact of student mobility on her via positive personal appraisal -"very happy". Her positive appraisal is met with recognition from her friends, which is presented by shifting the footing from *author* to *animator* to voice the response of her friends in *"Oh, it's nice, for you! Latvia is good for you!"* Their positive appraisal and acknowledgement of the beneficial effect of mobility on her as well as the choice

of the host country are intensified by repetition of positive evaluative "nice for you", "good for you".

Via linguistic choices and sharing photos on social media with their friends from home, both Chie and Jan establish a positive self-representation, as the beneficiaries of student mobility.

Summary

The analysis and discussion of the interview extracts with Erasmus students revealed the significance of the very context of student mobility as a transformative experience. From the moment when the mobile students enter the unfamiliar environment of the host country, they encounter a number of challenges, ranging from orientation in the local environment to coping with what for many is life on their own for the first time. This is a trying period that gradually progresses from the initial shock of entry into the "world unknown" closely tied with emotional response resembling "derealisation" (Steinberg & Schnall, 2008), in line with earlier research findings (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001, Dervin, 2006) towards a more comfortable stage when Erasmus students come to terms with living in the host country, their own *strangeness* and that of others.

In the course of their stay Erasmus students meet different strangers, mostly among other Erasmus students, and form friendships. Having formed the "social networks" consisting almost exclusively of other exchange students, similar to Coleman's, Papatsiba's, Dervin's and Van Mol's observations (Coleman, 2006; 2013; Papatsiba, 2006; Dervin, 2006; Van Mol, 2013), Erasmus students seem to feel more comfortable in the host country.

The very community of Erasmus students and the intercultural contacts promote an increase in awareness of own and others' *national/ ethnic/cultural identities*, which are at times resorted to for the explanations of misunderstandings and differences in behaviour between

individuals, the pattern already recognised by some scholars (Smith, 2004; Joseph, 2004; Dervin, 2006). Closer analysis reveals that national as well as other (i.e., social, cultural, interpersonal) differences were also used as the categories to construct the connotational meaning of the EU motto, "unity in diversity". The representation of self and others by reference to *unity in diversity* is possibly heightened due to the setup of the Erasmus programme, where exchange students are predominantly exposed to the international community of exchange students and develop not only identification with Europe but also a *supranational identity*. The majority of the interviewees recognised it as "the Erasmus effect", which lead them to change their stance from narrower, *local* one, to a broader, *global* understanding with regard to themselves and others. Instead of viewing other Erasmus students as only representative of their national groups, mobile students came to realise their affiliations to Europe via shared "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1986), implicit of European integration.

This shift in *perspectivation* also resulted in Erasmus students' revisiting their identities, questioning and reflecting on management, performance, enactment of *subject positions* (Butler, 1999) in the new space and in relation to the new community (situated identities), redefining their new *membership categorisations* as multiple, rather than single. "Self" could not be considered as a fixed or permanent category, but rather one constantly negotiated and renegotiated with other interlocutors drawing on the emotive value ascribed to it by an individual in different contexts and with different communities.

It is apparent from the analysis of the interviews that Erasmus students tended to resort to *referential strategies* in order to indicate their association with or dissociation from different groups of social actors, drawing on *membership categorisation* and inclusion/exclusion criteria. The social actors and communities in discourses of exchange students were primarily constructed in binary oppositions via a *predication strategy,* as positive locals vs. negative compatriots or negative locals vs. positive compatriots. This positive/negative categorisation

was a commonly used pattern in in/out-group construction, where Erasmus students were predominantly constructed as out-group members with an inferior status as opposed to the superior in-group of the locals. This was a common topic for a significant part of the argumentation that followed, especially *the topos of definition/ name interpretation*, whereby constructing "imagined communities", creating images of the communities based on a mixture of media-promoted images and personal understanding. Some of the choices of topoi (e.g., *topos of culture*) revealed the discourse of stereotyping and othering, indicative of the *fallacy of hasty generalisations*. The *argumentation strategy* was commonly applied to justify the speaker's stance on one of the following themes/thematic patterns: a) arguing for "the new self" as a result of the Erasmus programme; b) justifying what the "other" is. In the interviews, the students often resorted to one of the forms of *interdiscursivity* – often direct quotation - to make references to the discourses/ 'voices' of others (friends, national groups, the EU, etc.) to reconstruct a real/or imagined communicative scenario as well as to illustrate or justify their argumentation.

Also, *intensification strategies* were used throughout the interviews, when *the illocutionary force* was intensified to highlight the initial difficulties at the start of the stay abroad, while later on it was used to emphasise the achievements and the beneficial nature of student mobility scheme. A *mitigation strategy* was used here mostly as a "face-saving act", to tone down the criticism of the locals. Thus, mitigation referenced uncertainty and unwillingness to commit to a *stable/unified/simple* category when talking about national/ethnic identities.

The following chapter will approach the research questions by bringing together the findings of the analysis of the political speeches with A. Vassiliou, Latvian institutional online texts (from Chapter 5) and the interviews with Erasmus students (from Chapter 6).

Chapter 7: Discussion of Findings

This chapter begins by reviewing the analysis of Vassiliou's speeches as a top-down, 'legitimate' EU discourse in the light of post-modern theories of identity and mobility. Insights gained from this will then be examined alongside the data arising from the student interviews to establish whether there are areas where the top-down and bottom-up discourses overlap (or share common views) or have contradictions or gaps. All the findings will be considered in relation to the previous research in student mobility, in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions raised at the end of Chapter 3 (above).

The research questions aimed to explore the role of student mobility context on the development of representations of identity in discourses of Erasmus exchange students by analysing the discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation used by Erasmus students when constructing themselves in relation to others in the course of the interviews. As regards the political speeches, the study was concerned with the way A. Vassiliou constructs mobile students from an institutional perspective that she represented in her role as the EU Commissioner for Education. To draw a comparison with the EU institutional discourses representing Erasmus programme and mobile students, as well as in order to gain insight into the Latvian institutional discourses, the Latvian State Education Agency's online publications concerned with Erasmus programme and students and their representations were studied Finally, by analysing discourses of Erasmus students (bottom – up discourses) on the one hand and the political speeches and online institutional texts (top-down discourses) on the other hand, the study aimed to identify the differences and similarities between the two types of discourses (personal and institutional), both as regards the content as well as discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation.

7.1 Discussion of Findings of Political Speeches

Having collected and studied three of the official speeches of A. Vassiliou, the former EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (2010-2014), the principal aim of this study was to explore the way the *Erasmus programme* was constructed in relation to Europe and the EU as well as the way *Erasmus students* were referenced via Vassiliou's choices of discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation.

7.1.1 Erasmus programme: continuity and success of the EU

One of the themes to emerge from the analysis of A. Vassiliou's speeches was the *Erasmus programme's success and the need for its continuity*, acknowledging its indebtedness to past mobility practices. An emphatic reference is made in retrospect to the historical period when Erasmus was first launched, 25 years ago (when *Speech 3* was presented), shifting the temporal frame back to the time when Europe was different from its current form. Unlike today, Europe was rigidly divided and had only a few opportunities for interaction, let alone mobility across the national borders. By making explicit reference to the numerous positive social, economic and political changes that have taken place in Europe as we know it today, Vassiliou praises *the success of the EU*. At the same time, she acknowledges the important role of the Erasmus programme in this transformative process, shaping Europe from the *bottom-up*. Mainly, it is owing to the positive experiences of individuals on the *micro level* that the new affiliations with Europe on the *macro level* emerge.

It appears that with the help of both historical narratives (concerning Medieval scholars and Europe in historical retrospect) Vassiliou illustrates the positive impact of Erasmus student mobility on Europe and thereby argues for the continuity of the Erasmus scheme. Throughout her speeches, the continued success of the Erasmus programme emerges as a widely recognised

phenomenon among the Europeans, a type of an established 'brand'. Thus, it is through the continued impact of Erasmus that Europe has become in Vassiliou's terms "a tangible symbol" associated with *personal experiences* of exposure to other Europeans, whereby the EU gains "a human face" and becomes closer and more recognizable and real to its citizen. There is an assumption that draws on earlier EU discourses, based in part on earlier EU discourses that bringing together European students will produce or boost a sense of "European identity" among them (EU, 1987). The Commissioner's stance also seems to favour *transactionalism*, supporting the scholars who have suggested that bringing together European youths will foster *European identity* (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Van Mol, 2011). Throughout the speeches analysed here, it becomes apparent that the Commissioner emphasizes the value of student mobility as promoting positive attitudes towards the EU and identification with Europe. A similar idea was expressed by Vassiliou's predecessor, J. Figel (2006), the former European Commissioner for Education, who was a dedicated supporter of the Erasmus scheme and claimed that Erasmus plays a crucial role in "breaking down social and cultural barriers among the Europeans", thereby forging and promoting *European identity*.

However, Vassiliou's assumption that intercultural encounters in the course of the Erasmus exchange will trigger the emergence of European identity has not been consistent with all of the earlier studies of the impact of student mobility on identity. Even though some of the earlier studies confirm that Erasmus does strengthen European identity (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Van Mol, 2011, Mitchell, 2015), other studies argue against this (Sigalas, 2010; Wilson, 2011) and still other studies assert that the identification depends on the students' place of origin (Van Mol, 2013). It seems that official EU discourses are sometimes at odds with the research evidence. While the top-down discourses tend to demonstrate a conviction that European student mobility creates and promotes European identification. Yet, empirically, this

assumption appears to be ambiguous, owing to different conclusions that student mobility scholars draw from their data.

Medieval travelling scholars, as the exchange students of their day, endured in many respects a comparable experience to that of the modern-day European exchange students. However, there are without a doubt some significant differences between these two groups. The students of the past were individuals of a different 'calibre' from the modern-day Erasmus exchange students, as they used to be directly involved in the running of the universities and many decision-making processes in which modern-day exchange students are only partially involved. Vassiliou holds up the legacy left by Medieval travelling scholars as something to aspire to and to continue in the modern context, where the modern-day mobile students are aided by the new opportunities available to them that were not available to their counterparts of former generations.

However, traversing Europe in search of new knowledge and experiences gave both medieval and modern-day travelling scholars *mobility capital*. Therefore, their experiences are to some extent similar because the outcome of their travels had an impact on positive *personal transformations* - change, mostly concerning a single individual – as well as *social transformations* – long-term change, taking place as a result of the immediate individual transformations by the gradual spread and effect of their experience on wider segments of society (e.g. their subsequent willingness to work and operate across national boundaries). Thus, student mobility is constructed by Vassiliou as a profoundly *transformative experience* on both *micro* as well as *macro* levels, which is consistent with previous research on student mobility (Udrea, 2012; Mitchell, 2012). Moreover, Vassiliou's claim that student mobility not only carries *immediate value* for the individual but also has a *far-reaching* and a *long-term impact* on European society, is broadly in line with the position promoted by the EU at large, as expressed in the *Green paper on learning mobility* (2009: 1) published by the European

Commission: "[learning mobility] boosts the circulation of the knowledge, which is key to Europe's knowledge-based future".

On a more *personal level*, the transformations that were reported of the past travelling scholars resonate with the reports of the modern-day travelling scholars who are argued to become more inquisitive and able to develop their critical thinking, cultural and linguistic knowledge as well as becoming more reflexive in their approach to interculturality. Vassiliou's claims that what once seemed to be "certain" or taken for granted before their stay abroad, becomes the object of inquiry during and after their experience of student mobility and life in another country. The Commissioner's claims are consistent with Block's (2002) observation of mobile individuals travelling across the borders and enduring what he calls "a critical experience". This "critical experience" in the course of student mobility causes "an irreversible destabilization of the person's sense of self" (ibid.), triggered by new encounters and experiences, setting in motion reflections on one's personal change and *identity*.

On the *social level*, Vassiliou continues to embody the EU rhetoric about the success of the programme. She refers to the transformations that are consequent on student mobility; though they are slow to materialize, she suggests that in the long term, they have a positive impact on society at large. Thus, Vassiliou drives forward her argument that, as the result of successful cooperation in the field of education between the European member states, young Europeans are given an opportunity to meet each other and form relationships with other Europeans. This has implications for shifts in perception towards "the European neighbours" such that a more inclusive perspective is achieved, which is especially apparent when compared in retrospect to the historical time-frame when Erasmus was initially launched. Importantly, having undergone personal change and having acquired new knowledge and skills, Erasmus students are argued by Vassiliou to become 'the ambassadors of change', as they bring innovation upon the return to their home universities and communities.

Other scholars (Benhold, 2005; Wolff, 2005; Byram & Feng, 2006; Eco, 2012) have predicted that societal change from student mobility was about to happen, and would occur as the result of student mobility, triggered by "the profound cultural shift" achieved from the shift in socialization, collaboration and interaction with other Europeans in the course of the stay in the host country. In fact, this change is largely dictated by immediate *local* as well as wider *global* contexts requiring the individuals to adjust to the new demands of the postmodern world (e.g., employment) and acquire a range of skills, including linguistic, (inter-) cultural, personal, social and professional (Coleman, 2006).

7.1.2. A *new* kind of European: The "Erasmus Generation"

Erasmus students are constructed by the Commissioner as a noticeable group of active mobile travellers, crossing national and geographic borders relatively freely, as opposed to the difficulties faced by their predecessors. This is a community beyond national identifications, evoked by reference to carrying a European rather than a national flag. This feature marks a community that self-identifies with Europe and wishes others to recognise and identify them as "Europeans". Vassiliou singles them out as the community of young Europeans, the "Erasmus generation", *interdiscursively* alluding to a popular term, widely used in the media and among social scientists today (Picht, 2004; Benhold, 2005; Wilson, 2011). This status presupposes a distinct position available to the "Erasmus generation" of today by alluding to the abundant opportunities that EU has made available to them that were not available to the students of previous generations. By reference to Erasmus students through biological/evolutionary terms Vassiliou implies their natural place in European society, constructing Erasmus as a shared and 'universal' European phenomenon.

Erasmus students are representative of the "new Europe", for whom Europe is a "home", characterized by "freedom" and "mobility". This representation of Europe as a home for

Erasmus students is constructed in contrast to the historical frame of earlier and relatively recent stagnation and immobility. The Commissioner resorts to this contrast in order to acknowledge and emphasize the positive achievements of the EU diachronically. The "Erasmus generation" plays an important role in this transformation as a distinct group of young, educated and Europe-minded people. By undergoing personal change, Erasmus students transform and "build" a *new Europe.*

The very setting of the Erasmus programme is considered to be among the factors playing a role in this transformative process, promoting the contact and interaction between *culturally different* Europeans. What exactly is encompassed by "culture" in Vassiliou's speech appears somewhat vague. Also in post-modern scholarly literature "culture" is attributed different meanings and has even been referred to as "a floating signifier" (Friedman, 1994: 29), encompassing a wide range of elements. It seems, the very notion of *culture* as "pre-existing things, waiting to be explained" is no longer valid (Philipps, 2007:45). In the extract discussed here, in order to show feasible results of learning, Vassiliou draws on culturalist / essentialist discourse, stating that Erasmus students encounter "people" and "cultures" from different countries as if these were two separate entities and as if "culture" was something tangible that one can "encounter" and "learn" (in essentialist terms). This is an impossible task, as "culture" can only be "plural, changing, adaptable, and constructed" (see Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Particularly in the postmodern world with the present scale of mobility and intercultural contacts, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to be certain what "culture" is and what elements of which individual, national or international cultures one decides to reveal and the others are able to capture and interpret.

Nonetheless, Vassiliou emphasises that by coming into contact with a culturally different "other" has a beneficial and enriching impact on Erasmus students, boosting their intercultural and interpersonal abilities, which is consistent with earlier research (Dervin, 2006; 2008;

Papatsiba, 2006). As a result of the experience of difference and otherness, Erasmus students gain a range of *life-long skills* that are much valued in today's competitive world and allow young people to compete on the global scale. Among these skills, Vassiliou mentions greater intellectual flexibility, greater tolerance towards instability and change, adaptability and self-reliance, which first and foremost are claimed to be essential in boosting subsequent employability. In fact, a recent *Erasmus impact* study[49](2014) confirmed that student mobility does have an impact on young people's employment opportunities, as they acquire useful *transversal skills* (e.g., curiosity, problem-solving, tolerance and confidence) as well as gain *international experience,* much valued by contemporary employers working in an international sphere.

7.1.3 *Discursive strategies* and *linguistic means of realization* in the construction of the Erasmus programme and Erasmus students in political speeches

The Commissioner's speeches were abundant in discourse strategies and linguistic means of realisation, (see Table 23, summarizing these findings, below). This table provides an overview of the *discursive strategies* and *linguistic items invoked by* Vassiliou to construct a positive representation of the Erasmus student mobility programme and Erasmus students as beneficiaries of this scheme.

Table 23 Construction of Erasmus programme and Erasmus students in discourse of the former EU Commissioner A. Vassiliou

Discursive strategy	**Linguistic means of realisation**	**Outcome**

[49] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-1025_en.htm (accessed on 18/08/2015) *Erasmus Impact Study confirms EU student exchange scheme boosts employability and job mobility.* Published by European Commission.

Referential/Nomination strategy	*Erasmus*: denotational/ connotational and metonymic reference (programme/scholar)	To draw connections between the present-day programme and its indebtedness/rootedness in the past tradition;
	Reciprocal pronouns "each other"	Having mutual (among the mobile students) transformative impact;
	Membership categorisation	
	in-group of Erasmus students through the use of *inclusive pronoun* "our" in: "our Erasmus generation", "our communities", "our families"	Used to achieve the "inclusivity"/belonging to European community/ being its integral part;
	"Our"-"their" – pronominal shifts; "*our* young people" – abundant use of inclusive pronouns	Marking the modern day mobile scholars and the scholars of the past;
	"Then" – "now" – temporal shifts	Superiority of the scholars of the past compared to the modern-day students in terms of their role in running of the universities;
	"*Out-group*/ more disadvantaged Erasmus students" vs. "*the "elite*", the majority of Erasmus students	Inferior/marginalised status of socially deprived compared to the regular ("elite") *Erasmus students;*
	Conceptual metaphors:	
	ERASMUS	Medieval scholar's legacy transformed into modern-day educational phenomenon;
	WAR	Erasmus can directly and indirectly address and "combat" the economic downturn, implied by the metaphor of WAR (i.e., "fight");

	BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION ("***built on*** the conviction...."; "***foundation stone*** for [student] careers"; "the ***building tools***")	To reference Erasmus programme's progress and improvement; reference to construction metaphor is implied through "the building tools" – acquiring the needed skills to ensure employment;
	EUROPE as a BUILDING	Where all the Europeans find belonging – their 'home' and each other as 'neighbours' ;
	EUROPE as a MACHINE	Europe appears as a complex mechanism, powered by the processes of globalisation, affected by the local contexts and placing the demands/ requirements of specific personal and cognitive skills on (young) Europeans;
	DISTANCE/ PROXIMITY	As the result of Erasmus, change of relations between the Europeans from distant in the past to closely connected in present;
	CONTAINER	Mind of an exchange student is similar to a "container" that remains closed and is "opened" as the result of student mobility experience – causing existential transformation;
	Personification of Europe ("Europe is facing the challenge of youth unemployment"); *Metonymy* ("Europe" stands for the Europeans)	By personifying Europe, allows to background the responsible social actors, holding all Europeans responsible;

Predication strategy	Explicit denotation of continuity ("as I'm, sure you know...")	Recognition of past Erasmus practices today; alluding to shared history;
	positive evaluative adjectives (e.g., "valuable", "added value")	Ascribing positive characteristics to student mobility programme;
	binary oppositions between the categories of: - *quality* "whole" vs. "not whole"; - *temporal references* to self "the old self" (e.g., "before the exchange") vs. "the new self" (e.g., "after the exchange");	Personal transformations as represented via categories of *binary oppositions;*
Argumentation strategy	*Topos of history (historia magistra vitae)*	Indebtedness of student mobility to the past practices and the need for its continuity;
	Topos of numbers	The size of Erasmus cohort is used to justify the programme's significance for the young people of the university age;
	Topos of justice and equality	Principle of "equal rights for all" – irrespective of students background –equal treatment of all;
	Topos of advantage/usefulness, 'pro bono publico' (to the advantage of all)	Erasmus experience is believed by the majority of the commissioners to benefit young Europeans, therefore they should take part in it;
	Topos of definition	Defining "a contemporary European" (*if a person/group of persons is/are referred to as European(-s), they should*

	Topos of (shared) responsibility	*possess certain characteristics);* Europeans are responsible for dealing with high youth unemployment rate;
Perspectivation strategy	*Interdiscursivity* *Recontextualisation* *Frame*: Past temporal frame of student mobility (tense, spatial deictic, narrative retrospective account) Shift from *inclusive/involved* "our young people" to *distant/ unspecified* indefinite pronoun "other" and detached second person plural "they" Verbs of transformative material process (e.g., "broaden", "become") *Temporal references* "before" as opposed to "now" (before and during the experience of student mobility) *Temporal references* (e.g., "over the years") *Evaluative clause* with a mental verb ("I *look* at the world...")	 Direct reporting of the actual words of a former Erasmus student: to support the claim about the transformative nature of Erasmus experience; Medieval times/ two decades back (when Erasmus was launched); Showing involvement/ distancing with reference to the claim/ statement; Marking the change in the scope of perception among the exchange students; change of positioning of the students' *self* towards Europe and the rest of the world; to emphasise Erasmus programme's longevity; indexing the speaker's appraisal through perceptive response to change;
Intensification strategy	Determiner "many"	

		Emphasising the increase in the number of exchange students throughout the centuries;
	"very active"	Intensification of the illocutionary force: to emphasise the role of Medieval scholars;
	Repetitive realisation of comparative adverb "more" used to modify positive adjectives describing personal characteristics of social actors (i.e., *here* Erasmus students)	Intensifying the socio-cognitive skills gained as the outcome of Erasmus;
	Emphatic discourse marker "As I'm sure you know..."	Emphasising speaker's certainty about others' familiarity with the connotational and denotational meanings of "Erasmus";
	Temporal marker of longevity "after two decades"	To emphasise continued success of Erasmus scheme;
	Expressive adverbials "immensely" and "increasingly"	Used to express/emphasise the conviction about the positive nature of the claim (i.e., Erasmus mobility is meaningful and goal-oriented);
	Alternative hypothetical scenario/ use of *disclaimer* (to reject the superiority of other alternatives)	Adding the emphasis on the positive outcomes of Erasmus student mobility by assuming the potential (negative) consequences of what would have been the case if the speaker did not embark on student mobility;
	Rhetorical question	To confirm and emphasise positive outcomes of Erasmus programme;

	Comparative ("more than"); Open negation ("no other EU programme...")	To emphasise Erasmus programme's superiority/ special role;
	Repeated negation ("no common currency", " no common market")	By highlighting the absence of some attributes (here references common economic ties within Europe), the speaker highlights their presence today as a significant positive achievement;
	Deontic modality ("have to", "need")	Expresses obligation and emphasises the urgent need for individuals to change;
	Use of *superlative* ("the most pressing")	To emphasise the seriousness of youth unemployment today as the European challenge that surpasses the other challenges of today;
	Emphatic comparison ("more than the experience of a lifetime")	Emphasis on the superiority/ positive nature of Erasmus programme/experience;
	Intensifiers ("very" "really")/ *positive evaluatives* ("encouraging")	Used to emphasise the beneficial nature of student mobility;

Erasmus programme

As regards the discursive strategies, Vassiliou resorts to a *nomination strategy*, in order to confirm the generally known connotational and denotational meaning of "Erasmus" as a modern-day European student mobility programme, with the acronym (ERASMUS) linked to the name of a famous Medieval scholar, Erasmus of Rotterdam.

In her construction of the *functional meaning* of the Erasmus programme, the Commissioner employs a range of *conceptual metaphors* which construct: a) Europe as closely

interconnected (and networked) community and b) the transformative role of the Erasmus programme as addressing the common European 'challenge' (i.e., youth unemployment), thereby aiding all Europeans. For instance, the metaphor of EUROPE as a BUILDING (see Musolff, 2000) is suggestive of Vassiliou's positive representation of Europe, as having strong foundation and structure, allowing the Europeans to form close/intimate ties with Europe. However, Vassiliou's positive use of the metaphor conflicts with Musolff (2010), who has acknowledged that the metaphor of Europe as a house has changed over time, having once represented a strong structure, yet in recent times (due to difficulties between nations), it has come to suggest a house in need of maintenance (e.g., without a roof).

In her speeches, Vassiliou also makes use of the metaphorical cross-domain mapping, EUROPE as a MACHINE, though giving it a broader scope (not only *local* European but also *global*), pointing to the interconnection between all the Europeans, the individuals ("the cogs"), who only by fulfilling their function/role, having the "right skills" are able to keep the larger 'machine' (Europe) going and functioning in the wider global context. At the same time, with the metaphor of DISTANCE/PROXIMITY, the Commissioner establishes the transformative nature of the Erasmus experience also in terms of social change and changes of mental representation in relation to other Europeans. This is achieved by allusion to a successful transformation as the result of student mobility through shifts in relations between Europeans from "distant" and uninvolved individuals in the past (prior to the experience of student mobility) as opposed to closely connected and involved (following the exchange). This is suggestive of the European youths having formed/become aware of their European belonging through the proximate experiences with other Europeans.

Another set of metaphors is suggestive of the practical use and application of the Erasmus experience which is deemed to be invaluable in the current economic climate in Europe and worldwide, ensuring that Erasmus students gain the key skills to grant them employment. The

metaphor of WAR is invoked to depict the active role (e.g., "combat") of Erasmus programme, offering effective solution for dealing with the European economic downturn (i.e., the enemy). Also, the positive and effective role of the EU is invoked via the metaphor of BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION, by evaluative reference to acquisition of skills and knowledge ("the right tools") in the course of Erasmus exchange and the European programme is indirectly praised by establishing its concrete practical value – solving the problem of youth unemployment. With the help of the use of a *predication strategy*, Vassiliou takes a positive stance towards the value and the beneficial nature of student mobility and this becomes even more apparent through the repeated use of positive evaluatives such as "valuable", "added value".

Reinforcing both, the positive and beneficial nature of student mobility is also apparent in the recurrent use of an *argumentation strategy*, especially when justified via the *topos of advantage/usefulness, 'pro bono publico'.* This topos is interdiscursively backed up by reference to "the majority of the commissioners", pointing to their agreement about the beneficial nature of student mobility for young Europeans. This is further expanded by two other topoi, *the topos of history (historia magistra vitae)* and *the topos of numbers.* The latter in combination with the *perspectivation strategy* enhances the value of student mobility by reference to the legacy left behind by the Medieval travelling scholars, marked by *temporal* and *spatial deictic* shifts. By appealing to the listener's *pathos*, the Commissioner constructed shifts in perspectivation between the past and the present by involving her audience and showing the immediate relevance of Erasmus mobility (and its impact on them) via the choice of inclusive pronouns (e.g., "our young people"). She also used this rhetorical device in support of her argument for the programme's continuity (as the continuity of the established tradition) in the future as a *good practice* that has been 'tried and tested' by time.

As another justification for the beneficial nature of student mobility and the need for continuity of student mobility, *the topos of numbers* is used to illustrate the recognition of the added value of the programme by reference to the large number of young people embarking on Erasmus every year. At the same time, Vassiliou uses this as an opportunity to create a positive representation of the EU and its *ethos* as just and fair via *the topos of justice and equality* by reference to the equal treatment of all wishing to embark on student mobility. The Commissioner strategically argues that irrespective of students' background, the Erasmus programme is open/ available to all, dismissing the common criticism of Erasmus scheme's exclusivity.

The abundance of linguistic means used to realize the *intensification strategy* clearly point to the effort that the Commissioner makes to draw a positive picture and justify the value of the Erasmus programme, not only for the young people embarking on it, but also the European society as a whole, as well as the EU. First, with the help of such linguistic means as: determiners, emphatic discourse markers, temporal markers and comparative adverbs, Vassiliou emphasises the connection of modern-day Erasmus with the past practices, acknowledging the diachronic positive changes (social, economic, political) while pointing out the continued success of European student mobility. Drawing on an alternative hypothetical scenario, the use of rhetorical questions, comparatives and open negations allows Vassiliou to emphasise the richness of the benefits of student mobility by rejecting the superiority of other alternative ways of studying/ living.

Erasmus students

Vassiliou portrays Erasmus students as beneficiaries of the opportunities that the EU via the Erasmus programme has to offer. She recognizes the significance of their transformation as the result of living and studying abroad. Through the use of a *nomination strategy* the travelling

scholars of the past are compared and contrasted with the modern-day European exchange students, ascribing *membership categorization* to each group. As a result, medieval scholars appear more distant and temporally remote, while the present-day exchange students appear contemporary and immediate through the choice of *personal, spatial* and *temporal deixis*. With reference to the present temporal frame, Vassiliou alludes to existing discourses referring to a marked/perceived differentiation between "regular Erasmus students", the majority as "elite" (marked by inclusive "our students") and the minority, or the students from more disadvantaged background as inferior (marked by distant personal pronoun "other") and devoid of the opportunities to travel for study (see a more detailed discussion above).

The use of the conceptual metaphor CONTAINER and a *predication strategy* with a range of binary oppositions, points to student mobility as a transformative experience ("opening the mind") for an individual. The Commissioner justifies this via the *topos of definition*, arguing that an essential requirement for being "a contemporary European" is their ability to accept "strangeness" (or what is unusual and different) and being able to adapt to change. Thus, by entering the new setting, meeting different strangers, Erasmus students inevitably undergo change. A.Vassiliou explicitly makes references to Erasmus students as a new "community of practice" who, beside their youthfulness and a high level of education, possess a specific mind-set and seem to be positively inclined towards Europe and other Europeans.

7.2. Discussion of Findings of Latvian institutional online texts

Having collected and studied seven online texts published by the Latvian State Education Agency, the principal aim of this study was to explore the way the *Erasmus programme* was constructed in relation to Latvia, Europe and the EU as well as the way *Erasmus students* were referenced in these online publications as regards the choice of the discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation.

The interpretation of the findings from studying online publications by Latvian State Agency is deeply embedded in historical, political, and socio-economic context of Latvia that was discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.2.1 above and in many respects determines the connotations and emerging discourses.

7.2.1 Recognition of Erasmus programme in Latvia

The study of extracts from the online institutional publications reveals that discourses of Erasmus programme are regarded in political and economic terms first and foremost. Erasmus programme's appraisal and recognition in Latvia are used to illustrate Latvia's indebtedness to the programme. It is suggested in online publications that a clear need for student mobility is recognised by employers, Latvian State Education Agency, higher education institutions, as well as Latvian student representatives. It is understood that student mobility does not only allow to popularise Latvia and Latvian institutions of higher education but it is also regarded as an important element of the country's economic development.

The findings also indicate that the texts that have been analysed here tend to resort to Erasmus programme in order to construct Latvia's positive sense of openness towards affiliation and collaboration with Europe and with the world at large.

At the same time, more concerning issues related to student mobility emerge here, as the reasons for the decrease in the outgoing student mobility are analysed. This is closely linked with the current economic climate in the country and the attitude of distrust among the employers that by allowing a member of staff to embark on a study or traineeship abroad may result in them losing a member of staff, rather than benefitting from their international experience and newly gained skills.

In a similar vein, the theme of "brain drain" and a negative perception of "cultural capital" (Erel, 2010) resulting from study abroad are also present in the Latvian institutional

online texts. However, there is a degree of gratitude and praise expressed towards the Erasmus programme in particular, as opposed to the whole-course student mobility. Due to the nature of temporary, EU-funded student mobility, mobile students are obliged to return to Latvia following their stay abroad period, as opposed to their opting to stay abroad and seek employment there at the end of the whole-degree studies. It is the obligation to return to Latvia following the Erasmus programme that is recognised and praised here as vital for the country's economic development.

To realise the above themes, there is a tendency to resort to the topos *pro bono publico*, to the advantage of all, praising the benefits of student mobility for Latvia's economy and its place in Europe. This affiliation is constructed as advantageous via the discourse of business/finance, describing student mobility as an "investment" that will bring profit. This is intensified by temporal references, marking "past experiences" and "future benefits", implying long-term societal and economic transformations, strategically recognised by the state institutions (here, the University of Latvia).

7.2.2. Mobile students' obligations and image

Erasmus students are predominantly referred to as Latvian outgoing exchange students. They are constructed as having the responsibility of being "ambassadors" of Erasmus programme, promoting its positive image of success and world-wide recognition. This responsibility is presented against a negative image that has made its way into public discourses, equating Erasmus with "the party programme", while carrying a negative, undesirable connotation.

Another responsibility attributed to the image of an outgoing Latvian Erasmus exchange student is their duty to return to Latvia following the exchange programme, having gained international knowledge and skills that will benefit potential employers as well as contribute

towards boosting the Latvian economy. This argument resonates with the current socio-political climate in Latvia, as discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1 above, especially the reference to the state initiatives to encourage young well-educated and highly skilled individuals to return to their country of origin upon completion of a traineeship or study abroad.

The importance of the image of an Erasmus student and obligations assigned to a potential exchange student are realised via the *topos of consequence* linked to *the topos of responsibility*, outlining the potential dangers and negative consequences and calling for action and responsibility on behalf of a mobile student. This responsibility assigned to the mobile students is further intensified by spatial references moving from local, micro-context of Latvia, through meso-context of Europe and towards the broader, macro-contextual global implications, showing their complex interconnection.

7.3 Interview Findings

The second source of data and the second part of the analysis involved the empirical interviews with in-coming Erasmus exchange students in Latvia. The main focus of the study was to find out what the contextual implications of "being an Erasmus student" had on student representations of identity. As the representation of identity usually involves a different 'other', "a mirror image", analysis aimed to find patterns in the ways exchange students position themselves towards *others* present in their discourses by resorting to *membership categorizations*. Another aim of the study was to explore the discursive strategies and linguistic means of realisation that Erasmus students tend to resort to when constructing their identities in the course of the interviews.

7.3.1. Programme set up and impact on Erasmus student identities

The micro context of student mobility (i.e., being an exchange student, living and studying abroad, in another European country, interacting with other Europeans, speaking *lingua franca* English) has a direct impact on what identities are likely to emerge in the course of the stay abroad. The students find themselves in a *transitional state* with regard to their absence from the home country, and their status as "temporary guests" in the host country, or, as Dervin (2011:72) maintains, "the passing strangers". However, some of them are not always willing to admit their "temporary guest" status and strive towards "permanent resident" status, or being similar to the locals in terms of their behaviour and social networks including locals. These findings are consistent with Dervin's (2006) research, where Erasmus students also wished to be identified as "solid strangers", or as people who plan to stay in another country for an indefinite period of time, find employment, learn a local language and enter the social networks of the locals. This is an unrealistic goal, as Erasmus exchange is only a short-term experience of living and studying abroad ranging from three to nine months and such goals are unlikely to materialise within the context of the student mobility programme.

Even though exchange students reside in the host country for the duration of the programme, their experience and their encounters take place within the fixed institutional context of the Erasmus programme. As a result, it was found in this study (as reported by others) that exposure to the "native network" (Furnham & Bochner, 1986) is limited and Erasmus students are inclined to create new "social networks" with "the same ethnic group" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001:162), or students' own compatriots as well as with the "international group" of Erasmus students (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), who allow them to gain emotional support and create a sense of "home away from home" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001: 162), or a comforting "buffer" to deal with the challenges and difficulties that they encounter while abroad.

The very institutional nature of the Erasmus programme, and the limited exposure to the host community, promotes the marginal status of exchange students while abroad. This is evident from the interviews as exchange students follow university courses that are specifically designed for them and that run in English (rather than the local language(-s)). Also, student accommodation arrangements are a noticeable sign of segregation of Erasmus students from the host community, making meeting the locals difficult. A similar situation and its potential pitfalls have also been observed in other European countries by Murphy-Lejeune (2001), de Federico de la Rua (2003), Ehrenreich (2004), Papatsiba's (2006) and Dervin (2006), where the scholars recognised the potential dangers of institutional programme set up (see a more detailed discussion in Chapter 2), particularly the tendency towards the creation of essentialist representations of national/ethnic groups.

Language is another factor that emerges from the interviews as important in the context of student mobility. First, English for some time now has been a commonly used 'official' *lingua franca* in study abroad contexts (Kalocsai, 2009), which has also been confirmed in the present study. Students resort to English for communication with Erasmus students from other countries, who do not share the same mother tongue with them. Second, it appears that having a *lingua franca* status among other exchange students empowers them to construct new representations of "themselves" by talking about different concepts as well as themselves in English in a way they would not be able to do in their mother tongues. Third, similar to the findings of Kalocsai (2009), the interviewees in this study claimed they wanted to learn the local language, however the short term of the stay and the lack of opportunities to practise, did not allow them to progress further than the basic level of Latvian. Thus, being unable to converse in the local language, forced Erasmus students to resort to English as the primary means of communication throughout their stay. Fourth, the use of English on a daily basis for the majority of exchange students was an indicator of their "foreigner" status in external

interactions with Erasmus community members. Since foreigners were not fully welcomed in the community, it was regarded as undesirable and restricted their access to the host community.

It seems, based on the findings of the earlier studies of student mobility as well as the present study, the Erasmus programme set up is similar in many European countries. Thus, the context (as above: conditions of being on a European exchange programme) of student mobility programme and the exchange students' experiences do not seem to be shaped by a specific country of temporary residence, but rather - to borrow one of Block's (2002:4) terms - by the process of "destabilization of self", caused by the experience of "mobility": moving away from the familiar context (home, language, family, friends) and entering a different context, a strange one where one has to create new representations of self (new identities) by establishing new alignments (personal, spatial and temporal), new social networks and learn to navigate in the host country, in order to "regain balance".

7.3.2. The 'Erasmus effect'

The change of geographical, social and linguistic settings seems to cause an unsettling experience, 'the Erasmus effect' (the term I have coined here by drawing on the popular notion "Erasmus generation" (see Benhold, 2005)) triggers exchange students' realisation of the need for change and adaptation to their new context. Within a relatively safe institutionally-structured environment the majority of exchange students live on their own for the first time. Also, for the first time many of them come into contact with an international community of Europeans and start questioning their representations/conceptions of self, co-nationals and others as well as developing new identities, affiliations and alignments. The change that Erasmus students become most aware of is "self" in relation to the new physical and social environment.

7.2.2.1. *Personal transformations:* acquiring new skills and qualities

The initial stages of entry into the host country appear to be a trying and disturbing time for most exchange students. In the interviews, they explicitly point to the fear of strangeness and confronting the unknown, as well as the sense of their feelings of disconnection from the host country, as opposed to the habitual comfort and familiarity of the "home" country. It is this initial "shock of entry" that triggers subsequent "identity work", as exchange students start trying to make sense of who they have become in the new setting, resembling Wodak & Meyer's (2009) findings in their study of mobile individuals. Also, Block (2007) observes that new experiences, particularly involving a new setting and a different language lead to an "irreversible destabilisation of the person's sense of self". Thus, having entered the host country, challenged by the new experience and encounters, exchange students are likely to start reflecting on their own identity, questioning what earlier appeared unambiguous because it appears to be odd and unfamiliar to them in the new context.

Exchange students appear to realise the necessity of change as soon as they perceive a difference in the immediate setting, and try to fit into the new environment. Across the interviews, students mentioned *social adaptation, adaptation/familiarisation in the new 'physical' environment as* well as *cognitive-behavioural change* among the transformations taking place in the course of the exchange. The students indicated in their discourses (discussed in detail earlier in Chapter 6), that these transformations were a gradual process of change taking place at different stages of the stay. The interviewees even constructed the positive nature of the *Erasmus effect*, which included gaining a mixture of advantageous personal qualities associated with adulthood and maturity (e.g., independence, confidence), while becoming open and more tolerant towards unfamiliarity and difference they observed in other

exchange students (cf. with Vassiliou's assertions about the benefits of the Erasmus programme). The beneficial nature of *Erasmus effect* was also regarded as due to being exposed to the numerous challenges of living abroad (e.g., relying on one's own judgements, having to take care of oneself, making independent decisions, etc.) and having the stimuli to change, as opposed to their previous lifestyle of living in the comfort, safety and familiarity of the home country.

Moreover, owing to the *Erasmus effect*, students asserted that their exposure to the international community of non-/European youths allowed them to experience and observe the postmodern world in a safe institutional environment facilitated by the Erasmus programme. Encountering different (linguistic, national, cultural) others through proximate experiences of meeting strangers, provided mobile students with an opportunity to rediscover themselves as well. The experience of student mobility had a transformative impact on Erasmus students and their *identities*, not only with regard to change in representation of *self*, but also involving the shift in their outlook from *local* (familiarity and affiliation with their country of origin and immediate family and community of friends) to a broader *global* one (familiarity and affiliation with the unknown; encountering and learning to deal with difference, strangeness and unfamiliarity).

As a result, some students acknowledged change in their affiliation to the home country and their new affiliations to Europe. These findings are broadly in line with the hoped for outcome of the Erasmus experience expressed by Commissioner (A. Vassiliou) with regard to individual and societal benefits of student mobility (see the speeches analysed above, in Chapter 5). However, the interviewees seem to make more explicit and concrete claims as regards the immediate impact of student mobility on them, pointing out their *personal transformations*, while the long-term *societal impact* of exchange is either omitted or backgrounded in the interviews.

7.2.2.2. Erasmus as a 'Community of Practice':

Study abroad plays an important role in the process of mobile students' socialisation. The institutional constraints of the Erasmus programme encourage exposure and formation of relationships predominantly with other exchange students through shared accommodation, specially-designed courses and social activities organised exclusively for Erasmus students. Erasmus students thus seem to be encouraged to find the majority of their friends among other exchange students. These findings are consistent with a number of earlier studies of student mobility (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001, Papaptsiba, 2003; 2006; Dervin, 2007; Beaven, 2012) as well as Coleman's (2014) "model of social circles", which demonstrates that it is typical for Erasmus students to form initial affiliations with compatriots and/or other exchange students.

The analysis and discussion of the interviews suggest that Erasmus students are aware of being part of institutionally-constructed community, or in Wenger et al.'s (2002) terms, "a community of practice", which Erasmus students identify with via the three "modes of belonging/identification" (Wenger, 1998). Namely, this community is constructed via "engagement" with other Erasmus students in shared practices (studying and living together), given their similar "alignment" as temporary visitors in the host country and with regard to their "absence" from the home country. Even though Erasmus students seem to demonstrate their awareness of the constructed and institutionally imposed nature of their "alignment' with Erasmus community, they also appear to recognise that they welcome it, as it satisfies their need for companionship and offers them comfort and support while in the host country.

Moreover, belonging to the *Erasmus community of practice* seems to boost students' 'imagination' with regard to their European belonging. This is largely due to the setting of the scheme, which allows exchange students to experience emotional and psychological togetherness through proximal experiences with other European youths. In fact, these findings

are consistent with the popular image/representation of the "Erasmus generation" that has been frequently mentioned/promoted in the media and scholarly literature on student mobility (Feyen & Krzaklewska, 2013) and also occurs in the speeches of A. Vassiliou analysed earlier. In Vassiliou's speeches, "Erasmus generation" represents the community of diverse young people united through identifying themselves not only with their country of origin but also with Europe and other Europeans.

From the interviews, it appears that a sense of "European unity", or as Papatsiba (2006) has observed, a sense of "European belonging" emerges as a result of becoming aware of the *diversity* among Erasmus students. The driving force is their "diverse diversity" (Dervin, 2006) as individuals, which unites and attracts exchange students to one another, wanting to "engage"/explain, to demonstrate elements of their national culture (music, literature, language). Erasmus students come to fully experience the message behind the EU motto, "unity in diversity", inferred in the interviews via allusion to "Erasmus family" and "European village". Thus, it is possible to suggest that the Erasmus setting promotes awareness of diversity on the individual level not as an obstacle but as an opportunity to create common ground. Mobile students' shared interests develop proximate relations/ unity not despite but in addition to their interpersonal and intercultural differences, allowing for new communities and new identities to emerge.

7.2.2.3 *Language* as 'performance' of identity:

One of the shared features of the *Erasmus community of practice* acknowledged by the students is their use of *lingua franca* English for communication with each other and as the primary language of instruction at the host university, which is in line with reports in previous studies (Kalocsai, 2009; Dervin, 2008; Coleman, 2006). However, in her speeches Vassiliou only acknowledges "language learning", which takes place in the course of study abroad and

its benefits for students' future careers, while the use or the impact of lingua franca on individual's identities and representations seems to be overlooked. The effect that the use of different languages (not only the lingua franca or the target language) has on the individuals in the context of study abroad should not be overlooked.

The interview findings are to some extent at odds with Vassiliou's claims. Although Erasmus students express their wish to learn and even indicate having followed the local language courses offered at the university, they admit their disappointment with regard to the minimal progress that they can make in the time available to them and the lack of opportunities to practice what they have learned in interaction with the locals. At the same time, they are aware of the dominant role of *lingua franca* English in their daily interactions with other exchange students and locals alike. These findings are consistent with earlier studies (Kalocsai, 2009; Dervin, 2013) that acknowledge that despite the fact that exchange students tend to make an effort to learn the local language, the linguistic learning they are first and foremost exposed to is dominated by *lingua franca* English.

For the majority of interviewees, English was the foreign language that was used for most of the communication in the host country with few exceptions (e.g., those students who spoke the local language/-s). Switching to "life in another language" (Hoffman, 1989) with the limited use of their mother tongue made the Erasmus students reflect on the influence of speaking another language on their behaviour and even resulting in a reconstruction of their representations of "self" as a result of 'functioning' in another language. The interviewees recognised a causal link between 'language', 'context', 'thought' and 'behaviour'. For instance, they observed the difference in behaviour in their home country, speaking their mother tongue, as opposed to the host country, where *lingua franca* was used. Thus, it has been acknowledged by the interviewees that their identities are linguistically as well as contextually determined.

These findings are consistent with Butler's (1999:179) *theory of performativity*, as well as Goffman's (1959) notion of *footing*. The reference to an 'enactment'/performance of observable and more abstract elements of behaviour of a given (linguistic) community, bears the implication of non-essentialist post-modern understandings of identity as "versatile and transient" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006:33). This is why Goffman's (1959) notion of *footing* is also helpful here, as it allows one to explain the processes affecting the individual who switches from speaking one language to speaking another language. Thus, it allows us to conceptualise the behavioural change that Erasmus students make references to in the interviews as "the change of alignment" that the speakers take towards themselves and towards others (allegedly the given linguistic community members).

The situation becomes intricate when the interviewees begin reflecting on their use of English. Because English has the status of "the global language" (Crystal, 2003) instead of "the national language", it, and those who speak it, have a "global" affiliation. Also, due to its global status, English is the language used beyond the national community for communication between representatives of various national/ethnic groups who can be in close proximity or physically remote (virtual communication) from one another.

Speaking lingua franca English in the host country makes Erasmus students assume a "foreigner" status, signalling their being "in but not of the place they are in" (Bauman, 1996:29). This status attributes a new, *global identity* to them and affiliates them with the international community of mobile postmodern individuals, those who are not characterised only by their national/ethnic belonging, but also by their behaviour and use of *lingua franca* English (similar to travellers, scholars, backpackers, expats, migrants, international/exchange students). This observation is consistent with Dervin's (2013) claim that whenever people interact in a *lingua franca*, their identities become destabilised, rendering them "in-between" languages, "cultures", spaces, national communities and giving them opportunities to identify

themselves with multiple communities at the same time. This is also in line with Vassiliou's argument that student mobility encourages a shift in socialisation, collaboration and interaction with other Europeans, by making them more sensitive, open and adaptable to different others.

7.3.3. *Mirror image*: positioning and categorisation of self and others in discourse

Belonging to a social group is central to identity construction, as has been already discussed in Literature review above (see Chapter 3). According to social identity theory, "identity" is that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from "the knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981:255). However, the membership categories are never static but continuously revised, under "historical and local circumstances" (DeFina et al., 2006:355), shaping individuals' affiliation with different groups as well as the meaning they attribute to the social categories across time and in different social contexts.

Erasmus students reveal in their interviews that establishing relationships with others helps them not only to adapt to living abroad but also to make sense of their experiences away from their home country. Inevitably, they start questioning what was familiar to them from previous experiences and encounters as well as questioning who they used to be, compared to who they have become as the result of student mobility. As the interviewees begin reflecting on their experiences in the host country, they refer to *other exchange students, locals, different national communities* and their *compatriots* as a "mirror image" (Wodak et al., 2009:14), by creating representations of themselves in comparison to others. Namely, they draw on a range of *membership categorisation* criteria, establishing what groups or communities they and others belong to by establishing differences and similarities with other communities as well as the boundaries between what is "normal"/ "acceptable" and what is not.

The analysis of the interviews in Chapter 6 has clear indications of a number of criteria for *membership categorisation* among Erasmus students in relation to different groups that are present in their discourses. The criteria include: *inclusion* (belonging) or *exclusion* (marginalisation) from a group, based on contrasting categories, such as language

competence/lack of such; *positive/negative attributes* with regard to own status in the host country, in relation to the locals, other exchange students and compatriots, drawing on the individual's alignments towards other group members, particularly with the help of such categories as *familiar/strange, similar/different, good/bad, close/distant.* These categories were seldom constructed as *fixed* or *permanent*, rather they appeared as *contextually-determined shifting* categories of multiple memberships in relation to different groups at different times and in different contexts.

7.3.3.1. Self and Erasmus students

Erasmus students claim that the bulk of their friends while abroad are found among their Erasmus circle, which provides them with emotional support in the absence of family and friends from home. They reveal *togetherness* of Erasmus as a community, interacting in a lingua franca and aware of their shared European belonging. Yet, similarly to Dervin's (2006) study, at times Erasmus students demonstrate their "unfaithfulness" towards the Erasmus community, as they point out their distinctiveness or express their criticisms of other Erasmus students.

Inclusion/exclusion

"Language" is the category that often appears in the interviews in a range of contexts. *First*, Erasmus students demonstrate their sensitivity to *switching to a different language* in the context of student mobility. While at the start, exchange students tend to communicate with other exchange students who share their mother tongue, soon they begin to realise that this is also the tool for inclusion/ exclusion of others who do not speak/understand this language. Thus, lingua franca English becomes a neutral language that is generally understood by other

Erasmus students and that allows for others (who speak other languages) to be included in conversations and to be legitimate group members.

Second, as the use of *mother tongue* is significantly reduced in the course of study abroad, Erasmus students appear to find comfort and joy in communicating not only in their mother tongue but also in mutually intelligible languages (e.g., Czech and Polish, where each student speaks their native language and can be understood by the native speaker of another language). This puts mobile students in a privileged/ 'included' position in relation towards some, while distancing and 'excluding' them from others (those who do not speak the same or mutually intelligible language). Therefore, speaking one's mother tongue/or mutually intelligible language in the context of student mobility represents a form of identification via symbolic inclusion/exclusion and bears an emotional/affective connotation for Erasmus students.

Vassiliou's speeches have a very different perspective from the above on the role of language in study abroad. She focuses primarily on language learning and the measurable language learning outcomes, such as improvement in fluency. However, other related aspects of multiple language use while abroad are not given attention in the Commissioner's speech. Similarly, earlier studies in applied linguistics tended to consider study abroad from the perspective of acquiring a variety of language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), or "parts [of these skills] in isolation" (Coleman, 2015:34). However, the empirical interview findings of this present study show the importance of broader aspects related to the 'real-world' language learning processes such as "autonomy, identity, agency, and affect" (ibid.)

Similar/different

As discussed earlier (see Chapter 3), the categories of "sameness" and "difference" are the key constitutes of identity formation (De Celia et al., 1999). This division into what is familiar/ similar and strange/different resonates in the categorisations that Erasmus students resort to in the interviews. For example, when describing their choice of friendships among Erasmus students, they draw on national labels that characterise different national understandings of a range of concepts (e.g., time) as well as their values and attitudes (e.g., punctuality). It seems that at times the interviewees inclined towards such forms of social representation as "othering" and "stereotyping" (Dervin, 2008; Papatsiba, 2006), based on their interpretation of observable elements of behaviour (both, that of their own and that of others). When trying to justify variation in patterns of behaviour among different national groups, the interviewees tend to favour the in-/ out-group and self/ other distinction. Students engage in discussions, proliferating their "national culture", where belonging to a national/cultural community entails fixed patterns of behaviour and personality traits. Such essentialist categorisations allow for easier explanation of inconsistencies between representatives of different national/cultural communities.

The students also often resorted to positive/negative *stereotyping* not only of other Erasmus students, but of the host community and even their own compatriots. The national characteristics are often drawn from Erasmus students' pre-existent stereotypes, which echo Coleman's (1996) findings (see Chapter 2). It also appears that, similar to earlier research in the field of student mobility (Abdellah-Pretceille, 2006; Dervin, 2006; 2008; Coleman, 2006; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Papatsiba, 2006) Erasmus students often engage in *auto-stereotyping*. Besides, it appears from this study's findings that some Erasmus students even propagate positive/negative stereotypes about their own national communities, getting 'trapped' in discourses of social representation, particularly whenever they addressed existing negative representations of their national group. Arguing against the alleged negative representations of

their compatriots, and demonstrating their awareness of the dubious nature of national stereotypes, mobile students in fact engaged in constructing and justifying new representations of their home communities.

Some interviewees also acknowledged the role of the media in the formation and popularisation of some of the myths of national communities, while claiming that these myths and stereotypes may be proven wrong by personal encounters with individuals, the actual members of a national community. All in all, there is a noticeable degree of inconsistency that is apparent throughout the interviews when Erasmus students try to capture and compare their own and/or other national communities, as they appear to be torn between *essentialist* (fixed) and *non-essentialist* categories.

The findings are broadly in line with those of other European student mobility researchers such as Dervin (2007), Coleman (1996; 2006), Papatsiba (2003; 2006), Murphy-Lejeune (2001) and Beaven (2012), who maintain that resorting to social representations provides "trouble-free" explanations to mutual misunderstanding or discrepancies in observable behaviour of different nationals. Despite the dubious nature of social representations, particularly *biases*, *stereotypes* and *othering*, these categories cannot be completely avoided in intercultural encounters as they give individuals an opportunity to "package" the complexities of the postmodern world into concrete and understandable (rather than abstract) essentialist categories.

The tendency towards *othering* and *stereotyping*, which is prominent in the interviews and has been supported by earlier studies of student mobility in Vassiliou's speeches is merely reduced to *Culturespeak* (Hannerz, 1999), or culturalist/essentialist discourse. Particularly when the Commissioner argues that Erasmus students "encounter" and "learn" different "culture", as if "culture" were something "pre-existing, waiting to be explained" (Philipps, 2007:45). It seems that the Commissioner, pursuing the focus on the positive outcomes of

Erasmus student mobility, omits the possible challenges and issues that may arise from intercultural encounters, such as intercultural misunderstandings and overgeneralisations, which seem to be left in the background (not even mentioned) of her speeches.

The interview findings are at odds with Vassiliou's representation of "culture". Drawing on students' personal experiences, "culture" is constructed tentatively, giving preference to the anti-essentialist terms, acknowledging possible variation between culturally and nationally diverse individuals. Therefore, for Erasmus students in the present study "culture" does not appear as a separate entity, rather as a constitutive part of an individual, amalgamated into national identity, shaping individual's personal traits and behaviours. For instance, such essentialist feature as "being lazy" and "getting up late" are seen as belonging to "an imagined community" of those individuals behaving alike.

Signs of own difference:

A prominent theme across the interviews was the attempt of Erasmus students to construct their "special status", or their difference and uniqueness in comparison to the rest of the Erasmus students. The argumentation in support of their "uniqueness" was built around the two prevalent themes of: a) *relation to the host country and the locals; b) having academic/ social aspirations.* Across these themes, Erasmus students attempted to create their "exclusive status" by drawing on positive and privileged self-representations in contrast with the critical/disadvantaged representation directed towards the rest of Erasmus students.

The emphasis drew on the exclusivity of the speaker's status in the host country due to their ethnic identity or previous experience of living in the host country. As it appeared from the pre-interview questionnaires, some of the interviewees had family connections going back to Latvia, while some others had visited/resided in Latvia prior to their Erasmus experience. These speakers constructed themselves as *legitimate members of the host community*, or "solid

strangers" in Dervin's (2007) terms, having affiliations to the local community (friends from earlier trips; remote family members), as opposed to the rest of Erasmus students, whose *temporary visitor status* was comparable to "liquid strangers" (Dervin, 2007) with no affiliations to the local community, only staying in the host country for the duration of the exchange programme.

Some of those individuals, who claimed their *legitimate membership* in relation to the host country and their familiarity /relational ties with the host community, also claimed their *mastery of the local language.* Being proficient in the local language appears to allow the exchange students to feel superior in comparison to other exchange students, as it affirms their "legitimate membership" in the host community, being able to interact with the locals and to enter the *native network,* to which the majority of Erasmus students struggle to gain access to (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). In fact, the ability to communicate in the local language/-s and the legitimate membership in relation towards the host community left those Erasmus students in the *in-between the locals* and *exchange students position*, having access to both, *the international group* of exchange students as well as *the native network.*

Another sign of difference was established by constructing a representation of a typical Erasmus student and their transformation between "the old self" (back in the home country prior to the stay abroad) and "the new self" (resulting from student mobility experience) by *reinventing themselves* and acquiring an "artificial identity" (Coleman, 2013) in the course of the stay abroad. Having arrived in the host country, the behaviour of Erasmus students is bound to change, as their setting (social, academic, linguistic, and geographic) changes, in response to which, they change themselves. Some previous studies observed that Erasmus students took an opportunity to behave very differently to the way they behaved at home, under the pretext of living abroad and away from the commitments and restrictions of their life in the home country. It has even been acknowledged that "Today it [Erasmus] has become the infamous

international *social party network* that allows European students to live a lavish lifestyle abroad under the pretext of studying" (cited in Coleman, 2013:23). In fact, Erasmus is sometimes even colloquially and suggestively named "Erasmus Orgasmus", making reference to anything but the academic focus of the scheme. This criticism was also confirmed by some of the interviewees, who expressed their unwillingness to be attributed "typical exchange students'" characteristics.

Based on the interview data, the majority of Erasmus students claimed having remained unchanged in terms of their everyday activities/ behaviour, remaining mature and focussed, while accentuating differences and change in the behaviour of others. In fact, the speakers indicated conscious resistance to change of behaviour, as the act of *remaining true to themselves*, despite the alleged general pressure from the Erasmus community to change their socialisation patterns and attitudes towards academic achievements. It is against their own exemplary behaviour, promoted throughout the course of the interviews, that exchange students set themselves apart from the rest of mobile students and indirectly criticised others' short-termism, hedonism and insufficient academic effort (see discussion in Chapter 6, section 6.1.3.2.)

Vehicular identities

The Erasmus Programme in many respects recreates the postmodern world where young Europeans have a chance to experience mobility and the intercultural contacts within a relatively safe environment. However, the mobility of Erasmus students, unlike many other forms of mobility today (see Chapter 1), is short-lived (Dervin 2006) and made 'smoother' for mobile students because of the institutional nature of the programme (i.e., funding available for the students, pre-arranged accommodation and exchange-students' tailored programmes, as described in Chapter 2). Nonetheless, student mobility is a rich and diverse experience that

promotes a heightened sense of identity (Block, 2006; Smiths, 2004; Joseph, 2004). Reflecting on their own selves and especially the strangeness/ inconsistencies they observe in others, Erasmus students come to acknowledge that fixed categories (i.e., stereotypes) of others that they have or had prior to study abroad, associated with national communities at times appear inadequate and unfit to capture the individuals (representatives of different national/linguistic/cultural/gender communities) that they actually meet. Thus, in the interviews, mobile students seem to indicate that the heterogeneity of postmodern individuals of any national, cultural and/or ethnic group requires a more *flexible* and open-ended approach, incorporating a range of identities (i.e., national, cultural, ethnic, gender).

One of the ways to embrace the open-endedness and flexibility in discourses on post-modern individuals is to resort to the proposed notion of *vehicular identities*, or identities of complex post-modern mobile individuals who may change their affiliations towards various communities that they come to interact with at different times, in different spaces and via different linguistic means (i.e., in different languages that may be available to them). The notion of *vehicular identities* is broadly in line with the post-modern conceptualisations of identity as changing, "flowing", "liquid" (Bauman, 2004) and "ongoing process of becoming". *Vehicular identities* acknowledge heterogeneity of *individuals* and the multiple *communities* that one comes in contact with in the course of the stay abroad. *Vehicular identities* are indicative of mobility, change and flexibility that are essential in capturing an ongoing process of identity construction, involving discursive choices as individuals indicate their dis-/alignments towards different communities. This characteristic of *vehicular identities* seems to be consistent with Butler's (1999) "theory of performativity", where individuals "enact" subject positions, which involve contextually-determined identity work, pointing to being similar to one group, while being different from another. This sometimes leads to confusion, as regards what identity has been put on, when a mixture of traits from different national, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and

other communities are adopted, at times wishing to signal and at other times to hide one's genuine belonging. In the interview data the performative nature of *vehicular identities* becomes obvious in mobile students' switching between different languages (mother tongue, *lingua franca*, local language, or mutually intelligible languages), as well as the lexico-grammatical choices and discursive strategies that Erasmus students resort to, enacting affiliations or distancing themselves in relation to others (see details below in section 7.2.3.4, Table 24).

Vassiliou's political speeches do not directly acknowledge *vehicular identities* as existing or emerging in Erasmus students as a result of the stay abroad. The Commissioner rather points to the construction of the Erasmus community, which boosts positive representations of Europe and fosters a sense of *European identity* above the national identities, as reflected for instance in carrying a European rather than a national flag on the backpack when travelling. Although some students in the course of the empirical interviews did acknowledge the change in their perception of self, Europe and other Europeans, in my data, there were only few instances which explicitly pointed to the link between Erasmus exchange and the emergence of European identity.

7.3.3.2. Self and Locals

The interview findings reveal a lack of interaction between the host community members and Erasmus students, confirming the findings of earlier studies (De Federo de la Rua, 2003; 2008; Dervin, 2007; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Papatsiba, 2006; Coleman, 2015). The interviewees seem to view their marginal "liquid stranger" (Dervin, 2008; 2009) status as *inferior* compared to the status of the locals in the host country. The host community is seen as reticent and having the power of "gatekeeping", encouraging (indirectly) Erasmus students' *togetherness*, or the formation of "Erasmus cocoon" (Papatsiba, 2006), while keeping them at

arm's length. Erasmus students seem to be aware of that and recurrently look for justifications or causes for such segregation. One of the causes of their isolation from the host community, they suggest, are the institutional arrangements regarding the student accommodation. This is consistent with Dervin's (2007) observations of Erasmus students' accommodation as "heterotopias", the places kept out of sight, in isolation from the local community, or "international ghettos on campuses" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001:186). This situation has been repeatedly considered to be precarious and promoting the perpetuation of negative representations of the locals in some earlier studies (Dervin, 2007; Paptsiba, 2003; 2006; Coleman, 2006).

However, marginalisation of the Erasmus community persists, even though various local initiatives have been made by the host universities to promote interaction between Erasmus students and the local students, for instance "the Buddy scheme" in Latvia[50] (where each Erasmus student coming to Latvia is paired up with a local student, who acts as their mediator in the host country and the university, as well as provides companionship and support while on exchange), which has at times been successful in creating friendships between Erasmus students and the locals. However, outside the institutionally "imposed" interaction with the host community, Erasmus students express their disappointment at not being able to get to know or befriend the locals.

Erasmus students blame their lack of success in entering the native network on both themselves and the locals. However, this is first of all likely to be due to the *closed* "high density" social network of the locals (large number of people associated with it) and *open* "low density" social networks of Erasmus students (consisting of comparatively fewer people) (Milroy & Milroy, 1985), where the members of low density social networks are more open to new encounters and the members of high density social networks are not. The main reason

[50] http://esn.lv/?q=events/meet-buddies and http://esn.lv/?q=become-buddy-0 (accessed on 30/09/2015)

being the temporary status of the exchange students, the "passing strangers", leading a different lifestyles to those of the locals (even the local students), who the locals are not interested in befriending, as they will soon leave (having a fixed date of departure) and be replaced by other "strangers".

Some earlier studies pointed to the likelihood of Erasmus students engaging in negative representations of the locals as a result of their isolation (Papatsiba, 2003; 2006; Dervin, 2006), especially in the form of "ethnocentrism" and "exoticism" (Murphy Lejeune, 2003: 89; Dervin, 2007). However, across my dataset there were only very few instances where the locals were criticised or negative qualities were pointed out. When it did occur, the criticism towards the locals was expressed against the positive features of the speakers' compatriots, suggestive of exchange students engaging in comparison between the behaviours of the two communities. The three main negative features that Erasmus students pointed out with regard to the locals included "rudeness" and general "xenophobic" attitudes towards foreigners (those who spoke English) as well as the locals' downheartedness with regard to the socio-economic and political situation in the country. It is interesting to observe that the students create representation of the locals even though they admit in the course of their interviews that they have not met many of them.

For instance, Dervin's (2007) data revealed that Erasmus students develop strong negative stereotypes about their co-nationals, while the locals are predominantly regarded in more positive terms with the exception of being "cold" and "xenophobic", similar to the findings of the present study. However, in the present study, it is possible to observe that Erasmus students are cautious in their construction of representations of the locals. This may be due to the presence of the interviewer, a Latvian (a member of the host community), or to being wary of making a personal insult by expressing unmitigated negative opinion towards the host community. At the same time, a number of exchange students who made references to

the negative characteristics of the locals, also described the encounters with the individuals, who did not match the negative stereotypes and were referenced in positive terms as regards their behaviour and attitude to life and work. Thus, interviewees' demonstrate their awareness of the dubious nature of social representations and their inaccuracy in reflecting interpersonal variation within one and the same community.

Although the issue of lack of interaction between Erasmus students and the host community and the danger of leaving with the negative representations has received a fair amount of attention in earlier studies of student mobility (as discussed in Chapter 2), it was not raised in A. Vassiliou speeches analysed earlier. It seems that the Commissioner holds the contrary view that entering the host country automatically involves meeting the locals, who are open and willing to accept Erasmus students, being a part of their families. Nor is Vassiliou explicit about who is implied by reference to becoming the "European neighbours", either Erasmus students or the host community members, when she argues for the societal shift towards a more inclusive perception of fellow Europeans. At least, my findings suggest that while Erasmus students claim to have developed a more inclusive perception towards the "European neighbours", for them it connotes other Erasmus students and not the locals (even though they too are Europeans) and the sense of *togetherness* that Erasmus students perceive from their interaction and shared experiences all refer to the international Erasmus community.

7.3.3.3. Self and Compatriots

In the course of the interviews, Erasmus students admitted the importance they attributed to keeping in touch with their family and friends from home throughout their stay in the host country. Primarily, they communicated via *internet telephony* (e.g., *Skype*) and *social networks* (*Facebook*, *Twitter*). Posting pictures from the trips they went on, or just showing the snapshots of their life while abroad, was a way of sharing their new experiences and relishing

their friends' reactions and commentaries. This predominantly virtual interaction with friends and family, by sharing new experiences and encounters, provided Erasmus students with a sense of reassurance and offered them a degree of emotional and psychological support. In this way, the comfort and support of family and friends was conveyed virtually and allowed them to at least disregard the physical distance and ease the feelings of homesickness and loneliness (particularly during the earlier stages of the stay). By staying in touch with family and friends, Erasmus students maintained contact through frequent calls home, helping to create an illusion of still being at "home". This was also observed in Coleman's (2013), Coleman & Chafer's (2010) and Kinginger's (2008) studies of international students.

Later on, exchange students seem to praise their "new status", both as Erasmus students and living abroad, as opposed to their 'non-mobile' family and friends. This categorisation was used to construct Erasmus students' superiority over their compatriots, particularly to emphasise their positive qualities because they have ventured outside the "safety blanket" of the home country. Erasmus students also appear to "reinvent themselves" virtually, with the help of *different semiotic modes* of communication (e.g., use of language and images on Facebook) in an effort to construct the positive transformative impact of the Erasmus programme on them. By revealing snippets of their travels and portraying themselves as beneficiaries of the European student exchange programme, they reaffirm the rightness of their decision to embark on study abroad. This is particularly interesting when looking at the construction of Erasmus students' identities via linguistic and visual semiotic modes of communication, as by selecting specific images to reveal or conceal from others, exchange students *reinvent themselves*, claiming *new identities*. This involves an element of Butler's "performativity" but also manipulation and "play" in the presence of an "other", as an element of identity work, which is consistent with Turkle's (2005) observation: "Play has always been an important aspect of our individual efforts to build identity". This stance also supports the

modern views on "identity", as multiple, heterogeneous, flexible and fragmented (Bauman, 2000).

Although the theme of reinventing oneself or the aspects of communication with family and friends from home were not touched upon in the Commissioner's speeches, the idea of the transformative impact of the Erasmus programme on an individual, its positive and beneficial nature are all consistent with the interview findings. This has a positive implication, proving that the programme on both the institutional/political level as well as at the individual/ personal level is considered to trigger positive change. Also, as Erasmus students communicate their "transformations" to their compatriots, they are likely to instil change in them too – leading to what Vassiliou observed in her speeches as the movement from individual to broader societal transformations, confirming the value and the need for the continuity of Erasmus scheme in the future.

7.3.4. Erasmus students' use of discursive strategies and linguistic means of realisation to construct identities

This section offers an overview of the *discursive strategies* and their *linguistic means of realisation* used by Erasmus students in the course of the interviews to create identities by constructing *affiliations* or alternatively *distancing* themselves from other Erasmus students, locals (ethnic Latvians/Russians) and students' compatriots. The major part of the interview focused on the experiences in the host country. Therefore, the data predominantly addressed "self and Erasmus students", constructing their identities in relation to this community, while the other two groups (the locals and compatriots) were mentioned significantly less. This is likely to be owing to the context of student mobility, which is dominated by exposure and interaction involving other Erasmus exchange students and significantly less so of the locals and the compatriots.

These findings are schematically presented in Table 24 below. By drawing on Wodak's DHA and Reisigl &Wodak's (2001) use of *discursive strategies*, the first column identifies the discursive strategy that occurred in the course of the interviews and the function/purpose that it served in the context of interviews with Erasmus students, which is briefly summarised and will be discussed later. The second column draws on Reisigl & Wodak's (ibid.) use of *linguistic means of realisation*, as it offers an overview of the linguistic devices that Erasmus students resorted to in order to realise each discursive strategy. The third column, *outcome*, is used to provide a brief explanation of the function and implication of specific linguistic means of realisation as they were used in the present study.

Table 24 Discursive strategies and linguistic means of realisation in interviews with Erasmus students: constructing vehicular identities for self and other

Discursive strategies	**Linguistic means of realization**	**Outcome**
Referential/nomination strategy Indicates association/ dissociation or either of the categories at different times and in different contexts with different groups of social actors.	*Membership categorisation* • *Based on belonging:* Collectives "group", "friends" and "Erasmus students"; Pronominal switches (*I* - *we*) Conceptual metaphor of PROXIMITY • *Based on dissociation:* Erasmus: *xenonym* (foreigner), *de-toponymic* (from another country);	Formation of group belonging; Affiliations with other Erasmus students; Alluded to by closeness of social actors based on their shared national/ethnic/linguistic affiliations – referencing the "community of practice" *In-group* of locals and *out-group* of Erasmus students in the host country;

	Locals: *deictic* (distant third-person pronoun "they")	
	Distant/ exclusive third person pronoun "they" with *negative evaluatives*	Engaging in *stereotyping* or *othering*; construction of *out-groups*;
	Labelling social actors by politonyms/ nationyms/ ethnonyms/ de-toponymic anthroponyms	national labels/belonging "Hungarian", "the Poles", "The Europeans"
	Disclaimers, spatial deixis, negation ("I didn't come here to party"), presuppositions, pronominal choice "they" vs. "I"	Marking boundaries and explicitly referencing/expressing criticism towards other Erasmus students by distancing *self* from the *others*;
	Conceptual metaphor of DISTANCE • *May vary between belonging and dissociation to/from a group of social actors*	Alluded to by distance/disconnection of social actors based on their diverse national/ethnic affiliations;
	Personal, temporal and spatial markers/ deixis, comparatives;	Identity choices based on interpretation of the contextual (temporal, spatial, social) factors; sometimes contradictory (e.g., despite the physical/geographical distance, "mental proximity")
	Conceptual metaphor MOBILITY	Lexical units indicating movement and continuity that allow to establish multiple and co-existing identities;

Predication strategy Labelling other social actors and self more or less positively/negatively	Explicit and implicit predicates; positive/ negative evaluatives;	Ascribing implicit/explicit, positive/negative traits to different social actors and self; Constructing *positive compatriots* vs. *negative locals;* Constructing *positive locals* vs. *negative compatriots*; *Exclusivity/superiority* of own status in the host country as opposed to *inferior*/*disadvantaged/ different* status of other Erasmus students;
Argumentation strategy	*Topos of reality* *Topos of definition/topos of name interpretation* *Fallacy of negative representation/ stereotypes* *Fallacy of hasty generalisation*	Because reality is what it is, (different from the home country), the students have to find a way to modify their behaviour in order to fit in with the new reality/to accept it; By naming a given national group, the speakers construct fixed qualities, traits, attributes that each representative of the given group should carry; *Disclaimer* ("a lot of them [stereotypes] aren't true") arguing for the false nature of negative representations of compatriots; Speaker making characteristics attributed to

		the whole national group without any "real" evidence;
	Topos of culture	Because the culture of *X* is as it is, problems of misunderstanding arise in specific situations;
	Topos of uselessness/ disadvantage	*Double segregation* of Erasmus students through Erasmus programme's accommodation regulations, preventing exchange student from benefitting from some of the potential opportunities that the programme offers (e.g., language learning and meeting the locals);
	Topos of usefulness/advantage (pro bono nobis – to the advantage of all)	Acquiring new personal skills as the result of Erasmus exchange (e.g., independence, self-sufficiency, confidence)
		Beneficial nature of international and intercultural setting that Erasmus students are exposed to;
Strategy of dissimilation/exclusion presupposition of inter-national differences	*Topos of responsibility*	Erasmus experience as ensuring one to take responsibility in looking after oneself;
	Topos of comparison/ difference	Erasmus students' marginal status, as opposed to the superior size and superior status of the host community;

Constructive strategy (i.e., linguistic acts that "create" a particular national identity; referencing a wider national group by appealing (directly or indirectly) to national unity and solidarity	*Topos of comparison*	*Exclusion/inclusion* of Erasmus students; *Similarity/difference* between national groups; Cultivating familiar familial and friendship groups similar to "home"; *Locus a minora* – establishing sameness /similarity between different countries based on de-spatialisation *Eastern European* (de-toponymic anthroponym including reference based on local orientation); Explicit comparison "as...as..." and comparative structure "easier.... than..." implying a lesser degree of foreignness compared to other exchange students;
	Topos of similarity/ difference	Setting a *hypothetical scenario* to compare the outcomes of student mobility as opposed to staying sedentary. Language and context showing the signs of resemblance between otherwise diverse individuals;

Strategy of transformation Aim to transform a relatively well-established national identity and its components into another identity the contours of which the speaker has already conceptualised *The strategy of justification* The main function of this strategy is to restore, maintain and defend a common "national perception", which has been "tainted" in one way or another;	*Topos of difference* *Topos of consequence* *Topos of illustrative example*	Claiming familiarity with analogous setting/ familiarity with "typical" socio-economic/political issues in different countries; Two different contexts: "home" as connoting permanence and stability and "host country" as connoting change and difference, triggering an individual to change/ transform; If one has "sufficient" number of friends, they stop trying to make acquaintance/befriend others; Creating a fictitious scenario, where the locals welcome exchange students into their "social networks";
Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation	*Interdiscursivity*: Externalised constructed dialogue with oneself/ constructed dialogue;	Dramatization of an emotional response to the unfamiliar context; self as an *outsider* in the host country;

	Recontextualisation of the motto of Erasmus programme ("Erasmus: changing lives, opening minds")	Awareness of the changes taking place as the result of student mobility;
	Interdiscursive reference/ presupposition (*European village – global village*)	Implying closeness/proximity between diverse individuals (as is the case of Erasmus)
	Indirect reporting of other words/ speech/thoughts/ behaviours ("a lot of my friends said...")	Allows the speaker to gain a more authoritative stance in describing behaviour/thoughts/claims of others;
	Indirect reported speech	Re-enacting the virtual interaction with friends from home (own speech);
	Direct reported speech	Re-enacting the (negative) behaviour of the locals;
	Constructed dialogue with friends from home (in retrospect)	Virtual interaction with friends from home: voicing friends' response/ recognition of the beneficial nature of the stay and the choice of the host country; Friends questioning the choice of student mobility over the sedentary lifestyle (economic value: employment/ quitting a job)

	Framing	Different stages of the stay; affiliation/identification spatially determined;
	Spatial reference (adverbs of time; spatial deixis; toponyms)	spatial proximity between the countries/ mental representations between the individuals;
	Geonyms (e.g., Czech Republic" and "Poland")	Establishing own stance as Eastern European;
	Toponyms used as metonymies or/and personifications (place/state/town for people, e.g., *Eastern Europe*)	Constructing negative representation of Eastern Europe based on own familiarity with the socio-economic and political context of those countries (*here*: Latvia and Hungary);
	Positive global perspectivation: comparative, positive evaluative together with broad spatial referent "more comfortable in the world" ;	Shift in positioning of self towards the *world* and towards what is *familiar/unfamiliar;* Change in perception that takes place over time from *unfamiliar* to *familiar;*

		change of self (from *old* to *new*);
	Temporal references to mark different stages of the stay abroad ("now", "before", "in the past")	Marks the sense of disconnection in the new environment;
	verbs referencing *mental states* "recognised", "thinking", etc.,	Assuming a "neutral stance", allows you the concreteness, leaving the claim open-ended, without taking sides to avoid criticism of *in-group* members;
	Ellipsis, referential vagueness (e.g., "some of them yes...")	
Intensification/mitigation strategy To tone something down/keep it in the contextual background or alternatively highlight/emphasise something		
Intensification	Adverb "very" (in "very difficult") in reference to the scale of the shock of entry into the host country;	Authentication of the claims to the initial difficulties;
	Juxtapositions/contrasts/ comparisons to emphasise the "challenging" nature of the stay abroad;	Contrast between "easy living at home in familiar environment" and "difficult living in the host country where everything is strange and unknown";

Mitigation	Indefinite pronouns (“everything”); adverbs of degree (“a lot”)	Markers intensifying the degree of seriousness of the offence in *negative* stereotyping;
	Hypothetical scenario with a conditional structure “even if...”	Used to intensify the positive impact of student mobility on an individual;
	Use of passive voice, disclaimers	Mitigating criticism directed towards own family;
	Disclaimer, repair (“not too much”)	Mitigating the changes in behaviour taking place against one’s will;
	Disclaimer with temporal reference (“at least not now”)	Mitigates the temporary absence of a place the speaker can identify with;

The referential strategy is primarily used to construct own *affiliation* or *distance* in relation to a group. Pronominal switches (mainly in the form of inclusive pronoun *we*), collective labels and conceptual metaphor of PROXIMITY, are used to construct group membership by demonstrating strong affiliation/ unification with the Erasmus students or compatriots. Erasmus students also indicate their *dissociation* from the host community due to their sense of isolation and their “foreigner” status by reference to themselves via *xenonyms.* At the same time, border

marking and distance between Erasmus students and the locals is achieved by means of contrast between the closeness and familiarity (family-like relationship) between the Erasmus community members, as opposed to the distance and segregation that Erasmus students perceive in relation to the local community. The host community is frequently referenced by means of distant *third person pronoun* "they", suggestive of an *in-group*, which does not include the exchange students, the *out-group*. Their marginal status in relation to the locals is further intensified by conceptual metaphors of CLOSED DOORS and DISTANCE which are both evaluative in relation to the power and control exerted by the locals obstructing Erasmus students' entrance into the "native network".

However, the choice of affiliations is not always straight forward, as at times Erasmus students admit that they may adopt a shifting or an *in-between* stance, without a stable affiliation, which is contextually determined and strategically used. This is usually evidenced by the choice of *deixis* (spatial, temporal and personal) as well as by adopting the *conceptual metaphor* of MOBILITY and by resorting to lexical units, which imply movement and continuity, allowing the establishment of multiple and co-existing identities. For instance, in the interview data, while at times Erasmus students showed their *affiliation* with other mobile students, at other times they explicitly indicated their *distance* and disapproval towards the same community, or what Dervin (2007) in his research called being "unfaithful to their tribes", due to growing tired and frustrated with the continuous "Erasmus togetherness".

By resorting to a *predication strategy*, Erasmus students attributed *positive/ negative* labels to themselves and other social actors present in their discourse. The use of positive/ negative evaluatives as explicit or implicit predicates enhanced the impact of their argumentation and revealed the speakers' *predisposition* or *disapproval* towards the locals, speakers' compatriots and other Erasmus students. This was realised in creating "group labels" by establishing contrasting categories, such as "*positive* locals" vs. "*negative* compatriots" and

vice versa, *superior* status of the locals in their home country vs. *inferior* status of mobile students in the host country and away from home. The use of a *predication strategy* allowed students to draw comparisons and therefore revealed that group affiliations are a matter of a strategic choice, constructed in discourse and revealing individual's identity choices at the given time, within the given context and in relation to others (present or absent).

The use of an *argumentation strategy* primarily was centred around the key theme related to justifying and making claims with regard to *social representations* of *self* and *others*. The detailed analysis of the topoi used throughout the interviews, reveal that Erasmus students often engage in *topos of definition/ topos of name interpretation* by attempting to match certain characteristics and personal qualities with given national communities. This poses a significant challenge for Erasmus students, as they struggle to arrive at a suitable single definition, which becomes apparent as their claims reflect the *fallacy of negative representations* and the *fallacy of hasty generalisations*. The intercultural differences and misunderstandings that they observe are justified by the *topos of culture,* which is closely linked with the *topos of comparison/topos of difference*, based on presupposition of inter-national differences, which has an impact on their socialisation (e.g., in-group/out-group formation, friendship choices while abroad). The *topos of reality* suggests that, having become aware of the differences between self and others and in order to fit in with the new setting and new social actors that they come to meet, the need for change is revealed to the mobile students, implicit of creating new identities in relation to the new contexts and new communities.

Erasmus students constructed their response to the experience of mobility with the help of a *perspectivation strategy*. The choice of discourse *framing* pointed at the processual nature of change and adaptation that took place during the stay in the host country, which was constructed with the help of *temporal references*, such as *adverbs of time*, *spatial deixis*, the use of *geonyms, toponyms* used as *metonymies* and/or as *personifications* together with the

verbs referencing *mental states* and elements of *interdiscursivity* (particularly *externalised constructed dialogue* suggestive of initial distress) in the course of the stay. This is indicative of different stages present during the stay and reveals the shifts in stance that exchange students took towards self, other Erasmus students, locals and compatriots, evolving from homesickness and lack of connection with the host country towards becoming familiar and finding their bearings in the new setting, establishing affiliations with Erasmus students and developing *positive global perspectivation*. In other words, Erasmus students suggest that as a result of their mobility experience, they have undergone a shift in *positioning* of *self towards the world* from a narrow local perspectivation to a broader *global stance*. Particularly helpful in this process of adaptation and the shift in perspectivation was *socialisation* with other Erasmus students, while maintaining contact and virtually sharing new experiences with the family and friends from home. This occurs in the interviews, constructed via *direct* and *indirect reported speech* (*interdiscursivity*) used to re-enact the exchanges that Erasmus students had with their friends from home. Thereby, exchange students were able to enhance the apparent truthfulness of the claims, particularly to justify the beneficial nature of Erasmus programme and to emphasise the positive personal changes resulting from Erasmus experience.

Although there were a few instances where exchange students made use of *intensification/mitigation strategies*, there is no clear pattern of its use. There is only one exception - the *intensification strategy*, including the use of adverbs, juxtapositions/contrasts/ comparisons were used to reference the early stages of the stay and in order to authenticate the claim that Erasmus students endured initial difficulties.

7.3.5. The impact of discourse context and genre on the choice of discursive strategies and linguistic means of realisation

Referential strategy

In her use of a *referential strategy,* Vassiliou points to the development of affiliations among the Europeans as the result of Erasmus exchange by drawing on *conceptual metaphors* (e.g., EUROPE as a BUILDING, whereas when referencing a SPATIAL metaphor once existent distance becomes replaced by proximity). Therefore, the Commissioner implies that Erasmus triggers gradual social change, making European society more cohesive as a result of individual experiences of European youths. A similar use of a *referential strategy* seems to echo in the analysis of the interviews with Erasmus students. The findings confirm the sense of affiliation that Erasmus students claim to develop towards other Erasmus students, marked by the use of *inclusive pronouns* as well as the *conceptual metaphor* of SPACE (with its entailment of proximity), in order to emphasise the strength of the ties developed among the exchange students, which, however, in the interviews is only used in its narrow and immediate context. In Vassiliou's speech a broader, global context is implied, which has a transformative impact on the European society at large. This discrepancy with the reference and the scope of the impact of Erasmus is self-explanatory. The Commissioner's rhetorical account focused on the global implications of student mobility that have an impact on a wider community whom she was addressing, while the Erasmus students' existential accounts only reflected on the immediate, rather than the long-term implications of student mobility.

Also, by reflecting on their immediate personal experiences, Erasmus students demonstrate that their *affiliations* with a group or an individual are constructed against *dissociations* with another group or an individual, marked by the *conceptual metaphors* of CLOSED DOORS and DISTANCE. Even though the locals are also Europeans, the interviewees construct them as distant and withdrawn from Erasmus students. This segregation from the locals and its potential negative implications that has also been alluded to in earlier studies of student mobility ("Erasmus cocoon" in Papatsiba, 2003; 2006; "Erasmus tribes" in Dervin, 2007) is not accounted for in the Commissioner's speeches, where the Erasmus

programme is constructed as successful in every respect and there is an assumption that students will mix with the local population.

Predication strategy

The interviewees resorted to subjective evaluative *positive/negative labels* and attributed them to other Erasmus students, compatriots and locals by reference to *implicit* and *explicit predicates*. Labelling seems to be used in the interviews for drawing comparisons between the national groups, making claims with regard to *superiority/ inferiority* of different communities based on *positive – negative polarization*, similar to van Dijk's (2006:115) "ideological polarization between the in-groups and out-groups" and Reisigl & Wodak's (2001) "positive self vs. negative other presentation". By making contextually determined discursive choices in issuing *positive/negative* and *inferior/superior labels*, Erasmus students also make claims with regard to their own *stance* and assume identities in relation to different groups.

However, as the Commissioner's speeches steer towards political correctness, there is more vigilance and "political correctness" as regards her use of the *predication strategy*. Vassiliou, unlike the Erasmus students, avoids explicit *positive/negative polarization* directed at a specific individual or a group; instead, she uses *vague referents* (unspecified Erasmus student(-s)) to whom she attributes positive traits to point out the beneficial nature of the programme and its valuable impact on them.

Argumentation strategy

While Erasmus students primarily resort to the use of *argumentation strategies* in order to justify positive/negative attribution of characteristics to national communities (in other words justify their *stereotyping*) and in order to explain intercultural differences and misunderstandings, Vassiliou's speeches draw on *argumentation strategies* in order to justify the beneficial nature of Erasmus scheme and the need for its continuity by allusion to its wide recognition. Thus, while the predominant *topoi* that Erasmus students resort to (*topos of definition/ topos of name interpretation, topos of culture* and *topos of comparison/ topos of difference*), suggest a form of reflection or "analysis" in an attempt to make sense of the new experiences, the Commissioner draws on very different *topoi* (such as the *topos of advantage/usefulness, 'pro bono publico'* and *the topos of numbers*), arguing for practical application and usefulness of student mobility programme, backing it up statistically. The different choice of *topoi* can be explained by the different purposes/functions of Vassiliou's speech, (as a different genre), which was to convince both the EU Commissioners and the Europeans she was addressing about the need for investment in and continuation of the Erasmus scheme and its continuity in the future. At the same time, Erasmus students' attempted to justify their *representations* of others, especially nationally/culturally/linguistically different individuals in search of explanations for their differences and discrepancies in behaviour.

Nevertheless, *the topos of reality,* which was used by Erasmus students in the course of the interviews and Vassiliou's *topos of definition*, seem to share a common notion with regard to the positive transformation of Erasmus students as the result/outcome of the student mobility experience. The *topos of reality*, drawn on by exchange students, originated from the realisation of differences imposed by the new context, which lead Erasmus students to become aware of the need for personal change, creating new identities in relation to the new contexts and new communities. In fact, this claim seems to prove the ambition behind the Commissioner's use

of the *topos of definition*, whereby she asserts that one of the essential qualities of "a contemporary European" is their tolerance towards "strangeness" and the ability to adapt and to accommodate their behaviour to fit in with the changes. Thus, the interview findings confirm that, at least to an extent, having been confronted with *strangeness* and *difference* Erasmus students realize the need for change and discursively imply their response to it.

Perspectivation strategy

The use of perspectivation strategies significantly differed between Erasmus students' interviews and the Commissioner's speeches. Namely, Erasmus students framed their discourse by reflecting on their subjective transformations as the result of the stay abroad, drawing on *temporal references* and *spatial deixis* to emphasize and contextualize the process of transformation, particularly as regards their adaptation to the host country and life away from familiar setting. However, Vassiliou took a much broader factual stance, *framing* her discourse within the *diachronic* (historical) and political perspective, tracing the evolution of student mobility across the centuries and arguing for its indebtedness to the tradition and the need for its continuity. Though, both the Commissioner and Erasmus students drew on an abundance of *temporal* and *spatial references* and both reported a processual change, Vassiliou took a *partial stance,* directly addressing her audience in an attempt to involve them and show the relevance of student mobility today, while the exchange students reflected on their personal achievements and the impact of Erasmus on them personally, across the different stages of the stay. The main reason for this boils down to the genres and the immediate and broader contexts each discourse was set in. Namely, a semi-formal interview encouraged Erasmus students to reflect on their personal experiences of study abroad, while the Commissioner, a representative of the EU, had a premeditated agenda that she had set out to convey, aiming to persuade her audience of the positive and fruitful nature of Erasmus scheme, grounding her speech in factual and historical

information, lending meaning to her argumentation and justifying the need for continued investment/funding and support of Erasmus scheme.

Mitigation/intensification strategies

As regards the use of *mitigation/intensification strategies*, the findings prove to be determined by each discourse genre and context. While the political speeches of A. Vassiliou were abundant in *linguistic means* used to realize *intensification strategies,* the interviews with Erasmus students resorted sparingly to either *intensification* or *mitigation* strategies. The Commissioner, assuming her *ethos* as a political figure, as an official representative of Erasmus programme, in her speeches aimed at constructing a positive representation of the scheme, appealing to the *pathos* of its multiple beneficiaries, including Erasmus students, European society and the EU. In fact in addressing each of these beneficiaries, she emphasized and justified the positive nature of Erasmus programme by means of a variety of linguistic means associated with *intensification strategy,* including the use of *determiners, emphatic discourse markers, temporal markers* and *comparative adverbs,* as well as the use of *alternative hypothetical scenarios, rhetorical questions* and *open negations,* which allowed her to establish the unique nature of Erasmus programme (unlike other existing mobility programmes or other types of learning not involving mobility) and its multiple benefits, as a solution to European challenges (youth unemployment, skill mismatch, etc.).

As regards the discourses of Erasmus students, there were only a few cases when exchange students resorted to *mitigation strategies,* realised by means of *passive voice, disclaimers* or *repairs* in order to tone down the criticism addressed to their compatriots or themselves. The use of *intensification strategies* with reference to *intensifying adverbs, juxtapositions, indefinite pronouns, adverbs of degree* and *hypothetical scenarios* were all used

to highlight the difficulties faced by Erasmus students at the initial stages of entrance into the host country.

Due to the differences between the *genres* of *semi-formal,* relatively spontaneous *interviews* with Erasmus students and the *formal* pre-planned *speeches* by A. Vassiliou, the different contexts of delivery stand out, as well as the distinct aims when addressing Erasmus student mobility. While for Erasmus students, this was a reflection on significant personal experiences and encounters, Vassiliou's speeches strategically addressed the different stakeholders, while representing the interests of the EU. This explains the discrepancies in the two genres analysed here not only as regards their thematic preferences, but also the choice and use of discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation, as shown here.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This chapter brings the thesis to a conclusion by summarizing the aims and the research questions of the study, as well as reflecting on the way these were addressed theoretically and methodologically. Following that, the key findings and the contributions of the thesis are outlined. Finally, this chapter reflects on the strengths and limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research on Erasmus student identities and their construction in discourses.

8.1 Summary of the study

The aim of this thesis was to study qualitatively the individual (*bottom-up*) experiences of Erasmus students and identity construction in their discourses, as well as compare and contrast them with the *top-down* discourses of the former EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (Androulla Vassiliou) and Latvian institutional online texts published on the web page of the Latvian State Education Agency.

The theme of identity, especially European identity, is central to the EU-funded Erasmus programme and appears to be among its key expected outcomes. The programme is designed and framed by the institutional regulations and discourses of the EU, but it is also constructed in discourses of personal experiences of European youths and specific socio-political, cultural, historical and economic context of the host country. The institutional and the experiential are two distinct perspectives on the Erasmus exchange, which has become "the world's most successful student mobility programme" (EC, 2015). Although some earlier studies have looked at Erasmus students and their identities as the outcome of student mobility, the dual institutional perspective, that of the EU and the host country has not been taken into

account, neither have the two perspectives (institutional and experiential) been previously compared.

The questions related to identity inevitably emerge in the course of intercultural encounters, as mobile students begin to reflect on their new experiences, their relation/position towards others and the world. This new understanding of self and others is stimulated predominantly by the new physical and social settings that Erasmus students come in contact with while in the host country. Besides, speaking English (*lingua franca*), being away from family and friends, even though for a limited period of time, all contribute to the acute realisation of "change" in the way self and others are understood.

The literature review section of the thesis by drawing on: the post-modern theories of "identity" as complex and fluid (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2004; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006); the conceptualisation of "mobility" as an on-going, processual experience (Salazaar, 2010: Sheller & Urry, 2006) and the key findings of the earlier studies of European student mobility (Dervin, 2006;2007; Papatsiba, 2006; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; 2006; Coleman, 2006; 2013), revealed the need to explore the individual experiences of mobile students and the impact of student mobility on their lives. Following Wodak's DHA (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; 2009) allowed for the application of a robust analytical framework to approach the two chosen sets of data (interviews and political speeches).

Owing to the specific nature of each *discourse genre* (political and institutional discourse as opposed to informal/narrative discourse), there are more discrepancies than there are similarities between the three sets of data, both as regards the thematic choices, the overall discourse structure, as well as the discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation.

The analysis of the Commissioner's speeches revealed three major themes with regard to *Erasmus programme* and *Erasmus students*, establishing Erasmus as a successful and recognisable brand. *First*, in retrospect, the Commissioner drew on the past practices of student

mobility, referring back to the medieval times and the past state of Europe. The legacy left behind by the medieval scholars (including *Erasmus of Rotterdam*) and "good practice" of student mobility (e.g., involvement in running of universities and the value of democracy) are argued to be well-established today and constituting who the modern-day Erasmus students are. The diachronic references also emphasise the political, economic and social changes as the major achievements of the EU, having transformed Europe and the Europeans by highlighting what its citizens were denied in the past (e.g., ease of various forms of mobility, trade and communication across borders), but have readily available to them today.

Second, by addressing the need for change, particularly in response to the socio-economic problems and considerable increase in youths' unemployment across Europe, the Commissioner acknowledges the role of the Erasmus programme as capable of providing a possible solution. The major outcome of Erasmus is presented as a unique transformative experience, triggering the acquisition of a range of *new skills* that are much in demand in today's competitive world, whereby increasing young people's *employability*.

Third, Vassiliou indicates that *in the short term*, Erasmus exchange bears *micro* implications on exchange students' identities in cognitive terms, primarily by making them more inquisitive towards the unknown, while developing critical thinking as they begin to reflect on their own actions and behaviours, those of the other Europeans that they meet and their surroundings. However, *in the longer term*, the Commissioner indicates that Erasmus has more significant *macro* implications, affecting not only the individual identities but also wider society by multiplying the effect of individual experiences, especially as regards the affiliation with Europe and other Europeans. Returning Erasmus students bring change to their home countries and home universities, a noticeable social, cultural and political change gradually affects wider segments of society: the change, which has also been recognised in Coleman's (2014) study, especially in his conceptualisation of "social circles".

All in all, the Commissioner praises the *Erasmus programme* by pointing out the benefits of linguistic, social and "culture" learning, as well as the acquisition of transferrable skills, allowing the mobile students to be more competitive in the labour market in times of high youth unemployment. Yet, in the speeches discussed in the thesis, the Commissioner does not explicitly address what contexts or conditions of European student mobility affect the exchange students and what concrete processes lead to language acquisition, culture and social learning. Therefore, by highlighting the final outcomes of European student mobility, the Commissioner does not do justice to the process and the finer elements of change that the young Europeans undergo, such as personal, psychological and intercultural factors, which have been recognised by previous student mobility scholars (cf. Block, 2006; Coleman, 2014; Kinginger, 2015).

A different take on the construction of student mobility emerges from the study of online institutional texts published online by Latvian State Education Agency, an official representative of the Erasmus student mobility programme in Latvia. It is important to interpret the findings against Latvia-specific historical, socio-political, cultural and economic contexts, as pertains to Wodak's DHA approach. Latvian institutional discourses draw on the discourse of positive predisposition of Latvia towards the Erasmus programme, programme's success and global recognition. It is in reference to this European togetherness that Latvia allegedly wishes to be associated with by being a part of Europe and thereby a part of the wider world. The importance of this affiliation on the meso (European) and macro (global) levels, is intensified by the representation of Latvia as a small country, relying on the links with Europe and the world that emerge as a result of Erasmus project. This link is also an important economic factor for Latvia, which is regularly emphasised throughout the data set.

As regards the construction of an Erasmus student in Latvian institutional online texts, the local context is taken as a starting point. Erasmus student is constructed as a Latvian

outgoing exchange student, taking into consideration potential restrictions that might influence the decision to go abroad, following the recent decline in the number of outgoing exchange students. Also, "Erasmus student" is constructed as an ambassador of the Erasmus programme, similar to Vassiliou's speeches, which is linked to their responsibility to construct a positive image of a mobile student. Among the obligations ascribed to an Erasmus student is their responsibility to return to Latvia, having gained international experience and skills, contributing to the improvement of their country of origin and the contribution to the development of its economy. Thus, first and foremost Erasmus programme and Erasmus students are constructed in the institutional texts in relation to Latvia and the positive transformations that the experience can give to the country, rather than the individuals experiencing the mobility. This observation does not correspond to the earlier research findings and is likely to be Latvian-context specific.

The thematic, discursive and linguistic analysis of the empirical interviews with Erasmus exchange students reveals an important link between the Erasmus programme set up and its effect on exchange students' identity construction. Namely, from the onset of the stay in the host country, Erasmus students become aware of 'the destabilisation of self', as a result of mobility, triggering their search for ways to regain balance. For instance, students can adapt to the new environment by establishing friendships, which provide companionship and emotional support while away from the familiar environment. The programme's setting seems to encourage Erasmus students to socialise and find the bulk of their friends among other foreigners - their fellow Erasmus students.

It transpires from the interviews that early on Erasmus students become aware of their foreign status in the host country and experience a sense of "dissociation" (Turkle, 1998), as they confront their own and others' strangeness and unfamiliarity in the new setting. This seems to trigger a profound experience of what Block (2006) calls "irreversible destabilisation of the

person's sense of self", encouraging the mobile students to reflect on their own identity, questioning what earlier seemed to them unambiguous, as it appears odd against the new context. This destabilisation of self appears to be due to *the Erasmus effect* (the term coined here by drawing on the popular notion of "Erasmus generation" (see Benhold, 2005) and triggers exchange students' realisation of the need for change and adaptation to their new context), or an aggregate of contextual factors associated with student mobility experience (e.g., moving away from home and family for the first time, living in the host country, speaking lingua franca English, exposure to the international community of mobile young people).

In the interviews, the *Erasmus effect* appears to echo A. Vassiliou's observations regarding gaining independence, confidence and openness to change and difference. Namely, Erasmus students confirm that as the result of student mobility they become aware of a shift from *local* affiliations, determined by the relation/affiliation to the home country and national community, towards a *global* one, unrestricted by national affiliations and open to the international communities. Although only a few Erasmus students in this study explicitly indicated their affiliation with Europe, or acquiring "European identity" - one of the Commissioner's, desired (or claimed) outcomes - there is evidence in the empirical data of the present study to suggest exchange students' engagement in construction of 'new' identities, beyond the national ones.

The shift from *national* towards the *global identity* is primarily the outcome of the strong affiliations with the international *Erasmus community*, which draws on the following modes of identification" (Wenger, 1998): "engagement" with other Erasmus students in shared practices; having similar "alignment" as temporary visitors in the host country and with regard to their absence from the home country; belonging to *Erasmus community of practice* seems to boost students' identification with "Erasmus generation", rather than with a particular national, linguistic or cultural community. Creating identifications with Erasmus student community via

these three modes of identification is first and foremost contextually-determined. In fact, the programme's institutional setting seems to steer the students towards identification with Erasmus community of European and international youths, as the likely outcome of student mobility experience, which is referred to as "culture learning" and acquiring "European identity" in the Commissioner's speeches.

To talk about the changes resulting from the mobility experience in exchange students, A. Vassiliou resorts to strategic categories, used to emphasise the diachronic change between the past experiences of "the medieval travelling scholars" as opposed to the experiences of "the modern-day exchange students". Thereby, the Commissioner does not only point out the continuity of the well-established tradition of European student mobility in education but also emphasises the positive political and socio-economic changes that have taken place in Europe and which modern day Erasmus students can enjoy and benefit from. This point is supported and illustrated in the Latvian institutional discourses, demonstrating its significance for the country's economy, relying on its links with Europe and through Europe with the rest of the world.

Erasmus students employ noticeably different categories when constructing representations for themselves. Namely, Erasmus community is constructed as immediate and characterised by intimate 'family-like' relations, while the locals are constructed as distant, reticent and having the power to allow or deny exchange students' access to the "native network". In the course of the stay abroad, exchange students actively maintain ties with family and friends left behind for emotional and psychological support. This predominantly virtual communication seems to serve two purposes: to reassure Erasmus students' of the aptness of their choice for going abroad and at the same time to be the source of self-pride in having endeavoured to live and study abroad, as opposed to those compatriots who remained sedentary in the comfort of their habitual life.

Constructing their affiliations towards others, Erasmus students drew on a range of criteria, especially by drawing on the categories of *difference* and/or *similarity*, Erasmus students reveal their identity choices. Their discourse also indicated the presence of some other contrasting categories: *exclusion* (marginalisation) or *inclusion* (belonging); *language competence/ lack of such; familiarity / strangeness; positive / negative* (attitudes)*; close/ distant* (relations). All of these categories formed a part of the representations of Erasmus students themselves and others (locals, compatriots, other Erasmus students) that emerged from Erasmus students' accounts. It is important to note that the categories were seldom constructed as finite or fixed; rather they appeared as contextually determined and shifting, suggestive of multiple identities in relation to different communities at different times and in different contexts. Exchange students in this study confirmed their "unity" and similarity to Erasmus community, also argued for the signs of difference and emphasised their uniqueness instead. This was used as a type of a *discursive ploy* when, by assuming own difference and dissociation from the rest of Erasmus students, the interviewees made claims to exclusivity and superiority of their own status.

This brings us to *vehicular identities* (a possible perspective where identity may be interpreted from in a post-modern sense), emerging from our findings, where depending on the contexts and interlocutors, Erasmus students pretend to be someone or "put on a mask" (cf. Dervin, 2008; 2009), for instance when switching between different languages. As the term "vehicular" suggests, these identities shift and change, involving discursive as well as behavioural choices where individuals construct their affiliations and/or dissociations with one or more groups of social actors. *Vehicular identities* seem to be consistent with Butler's (1999) "theory of performativity", where individuals "enact" available subject positions and engage in context-determined identity work.

Speaking *lingua franca* English among exchange students may provide a sense of affiliation with the international student community, allowing room for an imaginary identity to emerge (or being someone else for a time), which would have been implausible speaking their mother tongues. Thus it seems that, for Erasmus students, speaking English connotes taking on an *imaginary identity*, not associated with any specific national, ethnic or cultural community. Also, by enacting *vehicular identities,* the interviewees seem to become aware of the *causal links* between the language they speak, 'thought' and 'behaviour' that emerge as the result of speaking that language with others, framed by *micro* (immediate) and *macro (*broader) contexts.

This thesis has also traced the discursive strategies and their linguistics means of realisation in a detailed discussion of the three types of data (i.e., the speeches, institutional texts and the interviews). The findings point to the frequent use of *conceptual metaphor* in political speeches to construct Europe and the change in affiliation towards Europe among Erasmus students as the result of student mobility experience. However, Erasmus students use conceptual metaphors sparingly and instead they show a preference for deixis (i.e., personal pronouns) to signal their affiliation or distance from a given community. While the Commissioner's speeches addressed macro implications of student mobility and therefore were less personal, the pronominal choices in the accounts of Erasmus students were indicative of self-reflective and personal nature of their student mobility experience. In Latvian institutional texts there was only limited amount of descriptive data and representations of both the programme and the students drew on the discourses related to business and economics.

There are also differences with regard to the way *predication strategies* are used. Erasmus students engage in frequent "polarization" (van Dijk, 2006), as positive/negative labelling of other social actors in their discourse via reference to explicit predicates. However, the Commissioner's speeches indicate her vigilance and cautiousness in her choice of

evaluative comments as regards national groups or specific individuals. Instead, she seems to prefer vague referents (archetype of an Erasmus student) to which she attributes positive characteristics in arguing for the beneficial nature of the programme. As regards Latvian institutional texts, they are strategically constructed, as to the detail and the presentation of the information, with the tendency towards more factual and less descriptive-evaluative categories. Occasional quotations are strategically used in order to construct a positive image of Latvia and the support that the state institutions (e.g., University of Latvia and Latvian State Education Agency) have towards the Erasmus programme.

Argumentation strategies also serve different functions in the Commissioner's speeches, as opposed to the accounts by the Erasmus students. Vassiliou's use of topos of advantage/usefulness is employed to justify the advantageous nature of student mobility and the need for its continuity. Erasmus students primarily use the *topos of definition* and the *topos of culture,* along the other topoi in order to justify their representations of others, particularly when trying to justify intercultural differences. Nevertheless, Erasmus students' use of the *topos of reality* and the Commissioner's use of the *topos of definition* seem to share their stance on the positive transformative outcomes of student mobility. Similarly to the Commissioner, Latvian institutional texts draw on the topos of advantage or *pro bono publico* to emphasise the advantages that the programme has to offer to all: institutions, employers, students and staff benefitting from the experience of work or study mobility. At the same time, Erasmus students are constructed via the *topos of consequence*, based on the negative representations as a result of excessive partying and *the topos of responsibility* that they should draw on in constructing of a positive image of a mobile student to others.

The use of *perspectivation strategies* was the most indicative of the different genres and agendas that the Commissioner and Erasmus students had. Even though both made use of spatial and temporal markers to demonstrate and contextualise the processual nature of

transformation that takes place as the result of Erasmus experience, Erasmus students reflected on their personal experiences, while the Commissioner framed her discourse within diachronic and political perspectives. These choices also indicate the different goals pursued by Erasmus students, who reflected on their personal experiences, as opposed to A. Vassiliou, who used reportedly 'factual' data to establish the credibility, continuity and feasibility of Erasmus scheme.

Further differences emerge in the choice of *mitigation/ intensification strategies* by both sides. Erasmus students favoured *intensification strategies*, especially when reflecting on the traumatic experiences related to the early stages of entry into the host country - resorting to intensifying adverbs, juxtapositions, adverbs of degree and hypothetical scenarios. Vassiliou used an abundance of linguistic means, particularly: determiners, emphatic discourse markers, temporal markers, comparative adverbs, rhetorical questions and open negations, assuming her ethos as a political figure, trying to "impress" different stake-holders, while representing the interests of the EU. Thus the use of intensification strategies allowed the Commissioner to construct the Erasmus scheme as unique, beneficial and able, at least to a degree, to offer a solution to the issues on the European agenda. One of such issues, the issue of employability was addressed in Latvian institutional discourses. It is presented by giving both perspectives: that of the employer and the employee, explaining the concerns that both parties might have with regard to traineeship.

8.2 Contribution of the study

This study has contributed to the advancement of knowledge on European student mobility and identity in a number of ways.

1. The thesis is innovative, as it approached the question of Erasmus student identity and its construction in discourse by studying both top-down and bottom-up discourses – something that remains unexplored in scholarly literature. Previous studies of European student mobility and identity (e.g., Coleman, 2014; Dervin, 2007; 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001; Papatsiba, 2006; Van Mol, 2012) researched empirically only the experiential, rather than institutional discourses. Neither have the two (experiential and institutional) been previously compared or have given a country-specific institutional perspective, integrated in historical and political context. However, looking at both perspectives, allows us to gain a more complete picture on the phenomenon of European student mobility. The findings of the present study revealed that, on the one hand, the discourse of the Commissioner, A. Vassiliou, was driven by promoting the success of the Erasmus programme, pointing to the programme's tangible outcomes, among which the claim that Erasmus student mobility promotes European identity – one of the key goals of the European student mobility programme. On the other hand, the discourses of Erasmus students suggest that European identity is only one of many identities that emerge in the course of the interviews, along with other changes affecting them as the result of student mobility. Namely, Erasmus students point out that student mobility experience, having withdrawn them from the familiar physical and social environment, lead them to question and rethink their views and understanding of themselves, others and the world around them.

2. The empirical data do not exclusively focus on the discourses of European student mobility and the emergence, negotiation and/or construction of "European identities" *per se*, as opposed to some of the earlier studies (Van Mol, 2014; Sigalas, 2009). Instead, the approach adopted here draws on the post-modern understanding of identity as first and foremost multiple, complex, liquid. Thus, it is suggested here that Erasmus students assume different identities (e.g., national, ethnic, cultural, social, gender, etc.), one of which may or may not be European identity, in different contexts and with different interlocutors. European identity and the different meanings that Erasmus students ascribe

to it is closely intertwined with a range of other identities, communities and contexts that Erasmus students enter in the course of the stay abroad.

3. To date, there are only few applied linguistic studies of European student mobility and identity construction in discourse apart from the studies by Dervin (2006; 2007) and Papatsiba (2003; 2006). Also, the majority of existing studies of student mobility are quantitative, while the qualitative nature of the present study offers a good insight into the varied, individual nature of student mobility experience and its role in identity construction. The findings of the present study offer valuable information about the actual impact of the programme on the individuals. This understanding allows for potential improvement in the organisation and smooth running of the programme, thereby boosting the potential outcomes of European student mobility.

4. While some scholars of applied linguistics, such as Dervin (2007) and Papatsiba (2006), study outgoing French Erasmus students, the present study demonstrates a diversity of linguistic and national backgrounds of the interviewees, while drawing on Latvia-specific historical, political and social context. Therefore, this study offers a more realistic picture of the international community that Erasmus students represent, speaking the *lingua franca* English, which is predominantly used for communication throughout the Erasmus exchange and which was used for the research interviews.

5. As this study drew on Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, it can be considered innovative in its theoretical and analytical approach to the study of discourse and identity in the new context (for DHA) of European student mobility. The choice of DHA analytical framework allowed for incorporating macro/ micro contexts, identity and discourse theories to aid the detailed linguistic analysis and interpretation of the data. Also, it allowed for a structured and systematic approach to the three types of data (interviews, speeches and institutional texts), making it more compatible for comparison as well as allowing for a replication of the study in another/similar context.

6. Drawing on Wodak's DHA, the findings of the present study offer a comprehensive list of discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation all three genre discourses: the institutional discourse of the EU Commissioner when constructing the European student mobility programme and Erasmus exchange students, the Latvian institutional texts, local-

context-specific themes and patterns, linked to such concepts as Bourdieu's "cultural capital" and the empirical interview discourses of the in-coming Erasmus students in Latvia and their discursive strategies and linguistic means of realisation used for identity construction (by reference to self and others).

7. DHA-informed data analysis and findings lead to the development of a new understanding of the identities that emerge in discourses of Erasmus students, which is captured by the notion of "vehicular identity" and which draws on Bauman's (2001) notion of "liquid identity" and his conceptualisation of "liquidity" as pertaining to the postmodern times, where everything is prone to change. This post-structuralist position adopted by Bauman allows to study identities in the process of their construction. Drawing on "liquid" nature of identities of mobile individuals, who, as the result of the stay abroad, come in contact with the international communities that allow them to "perform" a range of identities, shaped by the immediate (*micro*) and wider (*meso* and *macro*) contexts, their interlocutors, as well as their linguistic choices. The notion of "vehicular identity" challenges that of the "European identity", in the sense that it has been used by some scholars in essentialist and restrictive terms (e.g., Sigalas, 2010; Mitchell, 2012; 2015). However, the notion of "vehicular identity" suggested here offers a broader and more complex understanding of identity in the context of student mobility, taking into account the "Erasmus effect" (i.e., the programme set up, young people's status in the host country, language proficiency, etc.) that may be at play in the course of vehicular identity construction by mobile individuals.

8.3 Limitations of the research

Within the context outlined here, it is necessary to keep the following factors in mind, which may have had an effect on the data and the findings.

This study uses empirical interviews recorded between 2010 and 2012, and in order to allow a more precise comparison between the two data sets, the political speeches were taken from the same period. This was the time when a new stage of Erasmus programme (*Erasmus+*) was about to be launched, and therefore the majority of speeches did not address the 2010-2012 *Erasmus Mundus* programme that was coming to an end but they rather were primarily concerned with the innovations and change that would be integrated into the new *Erasmus+* programme. This contextual fact restricted the number of speeches that were relevant to the topic and the time-frame addressed in the study. Therefore, the speeches were only small (in terms of word count and variety) compared to the interview data. As a result, the data obtained from the political speeches does not reveal quantifiable patterns in the Commissioner's speeches, but rather offers an insight into *some* of the occurring themes related to the focus of this study, demonstrating the discursive strategies and their linguistic means of realisation used by the Commissioner in these specific speeches.

The Latvian institutional texts allowed to extend the data on institutional representation on Erasmus programme and Erasmus students by adding Latvia-specific perspective. However, selective and factual nature of the available data only provided a retrospective insight into the type of representations in Latvian institutional setting, potentially requiring further study of the emerging themes and discursive patterns.

It was only possible to interview a minority of ERASMUS students in Latvia, and therefore my findings are self-selecting and may have been more partial to the Erasmus experience.

Also, as the interviews were conducted in *lingua franca* English with the students of different national and ethnic origin (see Table 2), who do not share the same native language either among themselves or with the interviewer. That is to say, while English was the mother tongue for two of the interviewees, 13 others were non-native-speakers of English and

used English as a "lingua franca" in their daily lives. Despite the fact that the majority of our interviewees were non-native speakers of English, they claimed and appeared to be fluent in it. Nevertheless, since English was a foreign language for the majority of exchange students in the study, it may have affected the discourse production and the discursive choices of the speakers.

Moreover, I realize that it is inevitable that the situational context of the interview and the national and institutional affiliations of the interviewer (Latvian and a member of the university staff) had an effect on the outcomes of the interview. People are, above all, "actors" and "acrobats" (Goffman 1963) who play in every life situation, including the interview. Here I adopt Goffman's assumption that "play, showing and pretending" are inevitably present in all interpersonal encounters.

Besides, a number of constraints may have been the result of the very nature of the interview as a method of data collection, particularly due to its format, questions and the relationship between the participants. Although it was hoped to gain insight into the subjective reality of the individuals who were interviewed, exploring the meanings they attached to particular phenomena, the role of the interviewer is also significant (Dörnyei, 2007: 208) and impacts both the data collection and the data analysis. Thus, one of the sources of bias of the oral interview is what both Nunan (1995) and Duranti (2001) refer to as "the asymmetrical relationship" between the participants, as even in an unstructured interview, the interviewer is significantly more powerful than the interviewee. While at times the interviewer and the interviewee jointly engage in the meaning construction, at other times, they may resist this collaboration (Scheurich,1997; Cameron, 2001). Consequently, a participant may be saying what they think they ought to say, or what the interviewee assumes that the interviewer wants to hear from them (Cameron, 2001:19), which can present a possible threat to the validity of the data and, therefore, should be acknowledged as a potential limitation of the study.

8.4 Recommendations for further research:

The theoretical and analytical framework proposed in the present study could be replicated in discourse and identity-related research in various domains even outside applied linguistics or student mobility (e.g., media, literature) and could be potentially conducted in other languages than English and in other contexts (outside of Europe), looking at a larger data set of political speeches over a longer period of time, and interviewing students from similar national/ ethnic / linguistic backgrounds. Among possible areas for further research is longitudinal study of exchange students' prior, during and post study abroad, which might usefully focus in particular on the long-term implications of the stay abroad (possibly in relation to construction of identity/ self/ other representations). Another avenue for further study would be a research into the specific cohort of bi-/multi-national and/or multilingual exchange students, and their linguistic, (inter-)cultural, personal, academic or other aspects of adaptation as a part of study abroad, as the research on these groups in the context of student mobility is scarce. Besides, such aspects as gender and race and their construction in discourse in the context of student mobility were not looked at in the present study due to the limitations of both space and time, while these aspects could be of interest to the researchers working within the critical discourse analytic tradition.

All in all, even though there is room for further studies in the field of discourse, identity and European student mobility, this thesis demonstrates that the views and understandings present in the discourses of the EU Commissioner differ from those produced by the European youths. The politicians seem to overlook the impact of the exchange programme set-up, disregarding the implications that it has on the Erasmus students. At the same time, Erasmus students, while often aware of the "Erasmus effect", engage in "vehicular identity" construction, weigh up different contexts and social actors against what they believe they are becoming as the result of the stay abroad.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Erasmus exchange students:

Questionnaire for Erasmus exchange students:

To find out a little bit more about you before the interview, I would like to ask you to fill this questionnaire and either return it by email (dina.stronga@inbox.lv) to me before our interview or bring it along to the interview.

Thanks a lot for your cooperation!

Your name (optional)

Your age

gender	M/F
level of present study	Bachelor's Master's Doctoral studies

study area (e.g.,: Linguistics, Maths, IT, etc.):

previous experience of living abroad (if yes, indicate how long)	Yes/No
total length of Erasmus stay	3months 6 months 9 months other (specify)

Appendix 2: Information sheet for Erasmus students participating in research interviews.

Department of Applied Linguistics
BIRKBECK
University of London
Malet Street,
London WC1E 7HX
020 7631 6000

Title of Study: Identity Construction in Discourses of Erasmus Exchange Students

Name of researcher: Dina Strong

The study is being done as a part of my PhD degree in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Birkbeck, University of London. The study has received ethical approval.

This study wishes to explore Erasmus exchange students' (in Latvia, at the University of Latvia) use of language in identity construction;

If you agree to participate you will agree a convenient time and place for me to interview you for about an hour. You are free to stop the interview and withdraw at any time.

A code will be attached to your data so it remains totally anonymous.

The analysis of our interview will be written up in a report of the study for my degree. You will not be identifiable in the write up or any publication which might ensue.

The study is supervised by Dr Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis, who may be contacted at the above address and telephone number.

Appendix 3: Consent form

Title of Study: Identity Construction in Discourses of Erasmus Exchange Students

Name of researcher: Dina Strong

I have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it.

I understand that the content of the interview will be kept confidential.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am over 16 years of age.

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

There should be two signed copies, one for participant, one for researcher

Appendix 4: Ethics Form Adults

SSHP (School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy) Ethics Form Adults

(submitted electronically on 08/03/2013)

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, HISTORY & PHILOSOPHY
BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INVOLVING ADULTS (over 16yrs)
SUBMISSION TO SCHOOL ETHICS COMMITTEE

Please note:
If your participants are under 16 years old you will need to fill in the 'minors' form.
Do not attach any documents; instead make sure all the relevant information is included in this form (e.g. interview questions or questionnaires)
Paper copies of this proposal are **no longer required**
Supervisors must complete all the relevant sections in this form
Students' ethics form can only be submitted by supervisors **not the student**.
Expand sections for answers as necessary. **Do not remove any questions** – you must answer them all.

1. Name of investigator: _____Dina Strong _____
2. Status (e.g. lecturer, researcher, Phd student, undergraduate): ___ Phd student ____
3. Name of supervisor (if investigator is student): __Dr. Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis _____
4. Course/Programme (if student): _____PhD_____
5. Contact address for investigator: _____69 Durham road, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0SN, England_____
6. Telephone number: ____07963 079717_____ Mobile: ____07963 079717
Email: _____dina.strong@inbox.lv_____
7. Date of Application: ____March 2013_____ Proposed starting date:_____ March 2013_____
8. Reference Number(s) of any previous related applications:[51] _____
9. Is any other Ethical Committee involved: ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
If YES, give details of committee, stage of process/decision, enclosing any relevant documentation:
_____
10. Title of study (15 words max): _____Identity Construction in Discourses of Erasmus Exchange Students_____
11. Aims/objectives of the study (20 words max): __
1. To study a corpus of interviews with incoming Erasmus exchange students in Latvia. 2.To analyse Erasmus exchange students' use of language in identity construction.

12.Rationale: Which are the main theoretical debates or research traditions within which your research question is framed and becomes relevant? (100 words max):

With great number of people being able to travel both physically and virtually – mobility has entered our everyday lives and became a norm. Thus, as people experience various forms of mobility on daily basis and come into contact with many complex individuals, the question of identity becomes more acutely felt than ever before. We approach identity drawing among other scholars on socio-cultural linguistic framework put forward by Bucholtz & Hall (2010:18), who argue that "identity is a

[51] Only for 'routine' proposals

relational and socio-cultural phenomenon" that emerges in "local contexts of interaction" (i.e., discourse) , instead of forming a static structure rooted in "individual psyche" or in "fixed social categories".

PARTICIPANTS

13. How will participants be selected? - On basis of voluntary reply to an e-mail sent out to all Erasmus exchange students at the University of Latvia containing an invitation to participate in the study and a brief description of the study_____

14. Any inclusion/exclusion criteria? _____None_____

15. Where will the study be conducted? _in Riga, Latvia, at the University of Latvia__

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

16. Briefly describe what participating in the study will involve. (Max 1 page)
It will involve two things. First, filling in biographical questionnaires. Second, answering a number of interview questions with regard to the student's experience abroad.

17. Equipment/facilities to be used (if not included in answer to 16). Please provide details of questionnaires[52], interview schedules etc, & attach copies if they are not standard ones. Comment on content area of questionnaires, could any questions cause distress or offence? Invade privacy? Is there a strong rationale for conducting this research in spite of this risk? How would this risk be managed?

None of the students will be forced to answer the questions in the interview against their free will. The interviews start with the interviewer's reassurance that the information obtained from the interviewee will be used only anonymously without anywhere revealing the speaker's name/surname. The questionnaires will be coded!

Here is the questionnaire that will be used:

Questionnaire for Erasmus exchange students:

Please fill in the following form, or circle the correct answer wherever necessary
and return to dina.stronga@inbox.lv
Thanks a lot for your cooperation!

Your name (optional)

Your age

gender	M/F
level of present study	Bachelor's Master's Doctoral studies

[52] Please note that in some disciplines within the School, some questionnaire studies (e.g. when questionnaires are non-contentious, are administered anonymously and online) are likely to be 'routine'. Please discuss the issue with your ethics officer.

study area (e.g.,: Linguistics, Maths, IT, etc.):

previous experience of living abroad (if yes, indicate how long)	Yes/No
total length of stay	3months 6 months 9 months other (specify)
type of accommodation	university accommodation rented flat other (specify)

Here are the interview questions:

1. Self: Background and Expectations:

a. What kind of experience living/visiting abroad did you have before coming to Latvia? Are you used to travelling?

b. What were your expectations of the Erasmus programme (in terms of language learning/speaking, meeting others, living on your own, being away from home)?

c. To what extent have these expectations been fulfilled or not? Explain why/ why not

2. Self: the Actual Experience

a. What were your first thoughts/ impressions after you'd arrived?

b. What are they like now?

c. Could you describe your daily life here, in Latvia? What is it like? How does it compare to your life back home?

d. What does "being an Erasmus student" mean to you? How/ has this affected you/ your outlook on life/ yourself/ others (Erasmus, locals, compatriots, your family)?

3. Self and Others:

a. Who have you met since you've been here, in Latvia? Who are your friends? How did you become friends?

b. What have you learnt about others (back home, here in the host country) and about yourself?

c. Have you met/become friends with any locals? Why/why not?

d. Do you keep in touch with people from home (family, friends)? What do you talk about ?

When thinking about this question please bear in mind that according to College ethics guidelines researchers have a duty of care towards the participants, the College and their own safety. (Please read carefully the Ethics guidelines at the end of this document for further details). Additionally, you are required to be mindful of another criterion as described in the **Section 1.2 of the College Ethics Responsibilities and Procedures:**

1.2 Ethical requirements arise from an evolving understanding of the rights and duties of human beings. Ethics are broader than law, though the law can both reflect and clarify ethical duties. School staff are part of a changing social system. They are, therefore, required not only to abide by ethical principles such as justice, truthfulness, confidentiality and respect for persons, but also to attend to the evolving understanding of how these principles are expressed in society at a particular time.

Researchers are required to demonstrate a critical stance towards the assumptions and beliefs underpinning their proposal, so not to reproduce stereotypical and prejudicial views of participants. This is particularly crucial when dealing with vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

18. How will you find/access potential participants? (Include details of any relevant documentation e.g. letter to manager, advert, notice to go on notice board.)

I have contacted the University of Latvia International and Exchange Student board and asked them to forward my e-mail inviting Erasmus exchange students to participate in my study:
(This is the copy of the original e-mail):

Dear Mrs Gržibovska,

As I'm conducting research on Erasmus students' experiences in Latvia (at the University of Latvia) I would like to ask for your assistance in forwarding this e-mail to students. I invite Erasmus students to participate in my study by answering a few questions via a questionnaire and an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. I really appreciate your support with my research!
Sincerely,
Dina Strong

INFORMED CONSENT

19. Potential participants must give free and informed consent. You need to provide sufficient information about your study in an information sheet or note for participants. This needs to explain confidentiality and right to withdraw. Please modify the template information sheet at the end of the form so it is appropriate for your study.
Tick one entry here to explain how you will use the information sheet:

X Information sheet distributed to each participant
☐ Information sheet displayed on screen for all participants
☐ Information included in header of questionnaire
☐ Other (specify) _____

20. Participants must sign a consent form to indicate consent. Participants must sign two copies – participant keeps one, you keep the other. Please modify the consent form at the end of this application form so it fits your study. The only exception to this is if you do not meet your participants because you send a questionnaire through the post to participants, or they respond to an online questionnaire, or the questionnaire is administered face to face in the street, in which case their completion of the questionnaire signals consent. In all these cases,

you will need to ensure that participants have read or otherwise been informed of the consent statement contained below. How will you obtain consent?

X Signed consent form attached to end of this application form
☐ Postal or online questionnaire study

CONFIDENTIALITY

21. It is important that you respect the confidentiality of your participants. [53] You should only record identifying information if necessary and wherever possible it should be kept separate from the data. Possible ways of doing this are: data is coded and the key linking the code and the participant's identity is kept in a separate locked cabinet from the data. All data with identifying information must be kept in a locked cabinet. Particular care needs to be taken with interviews. Names should be changed on transcripts and tapes locked up. Please describe here how you will maintain the participants' confidentiality in this particular study?

Names of the interviewees will be changed (i.e., coded) and the interview recordings will be locked up. As regards the questionnaire – it was returned via e-mail and does not mention the interviewee's name/surname.

22. If the answer to any item below is YES please give details and outline how you will ensure the participant's well being. Does the study involve:

(a) Unpleasant stimuli or unpleasant situations? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(b) Invasive procedures? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(c) Deprivation or restriction (e.g., food, water, sleep)? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(d) Drug administration? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(e) Any procedure which could cause harm to the participant? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(f) Any groups of participants whose physical/mental health could be put at risk? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(g) Actively misleading or deceiving the participants? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(h) Withholding information about the nature or outcome of the study? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(i) Any inducement or payment to take part in the study ~~**YES**~~**/NO**
(j) Any procedure that might *inadvertently* cause distress to the participant? ~~**YES**~~**/NO**

(ja) if the answer is **NO**; tell us why

I will do my utmost to ensure the friendly and stress-free atmosphere, which is why the proposed meeting place will be the university cafeteria, which is light and airy and is often an informal meeting place for social interaction for many students.

(jb) if the answer is **YES;** you will need to prepare for the possibility of a participant becoming distressed. We suggest the following: if the participant shows any sign of distress, their wellbeing, rather than data collection, has to be your priority. It is advisable to stop the recording and ask the participant if they would prefer to stop the interview. They might want to talk to you about what is distressing them. Be mindful of boundaries and that the participant might benefit from professional help which you are not in the position, nor

[53] If anonymity is **not** required, or if knowing the identity of the participant is integral and necessary information for the project, you will need to clearly state why this is the case. In such circumstances, you will need to provide participant's written consent to their names being used.

under obligation to provide. In such eventuality, you need to have information about support services available to offer to the participant in the unlikely event that they do indeed become very upset. Outline this here.
Please consult your supervisor or experienced colleagues to prepare yourself before embarking on your research.

23. If you feel the proposed investigation raises other ethical issues please outline them here.

24. I consider my study conforms with the expectations of ethical psychological/social/ sociological research:
YES/ ~~NO~~

SIGNATURE of investigator: Date:

Dina Strong 06/03/2013

If this is a student project, the supervisor must read the application carefully, and answer the following questions and sign below.
It is the supervisor's responsibility to send the non-routine proposals to the SSHP Ethics committee for approval

I have read the application and/or discussed its ethical implications with the student and confirm that in my view all ethical issues have been addressed: **YES/ NO**

I consider the application routine because it does not raise ethical issues beyond those of a study which has already received school ethics approval: **YES/ NO**

I consider the application non-routine and believe it needs to be assessed by the ethics committee:
YES/ NO

SIGNATURE of supervisor: Date:

_____ _____

Completed NON-ROUTINE forms should be sent ELECTRONICALLY ONLY to SSHP Ethics Committee: sshpethics@bbk.ac.uk.

Researcher should keep a copy of the form for your files.
Allow sufficient time for this process.
You should not begin collecting data from participants until ethics approval has been received.

RESEARCH ETHICS GENERAL GUIDANCE

Ethical approval for all research. Ethical approval is required for all research which involves human participants. This includes research where there is no face-to-face interaction between researcher and participants (e.g., postal questionnaires, telephone interviews, and internet surveys).

Protection of participants. All researchers are obliged to protect the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of their participants, to preserve their dignity and rights, and to safeguard their anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed consent. Article 17 of the *Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights in Biomedicine or Biomedical Research* states: 'No research on a person may be carried out without the informed, free, express, specific and documented consent of the person'. This places a legal obligation on researchers to obtain and record consent from participants or their guardians, on the basis of information that should be given to them before their participation begins.

No coercion. There should be no coercion in the recruitment of participants.

The right to withdraw. There is an obligation on participants to participate in research for which they have volunteered. Nevertheless, participants must be given the right to withdraw from any given research, at any time without penalty and without providing reason. Participants can also require that their data be withdrawn from the study.

Anonymity and confidentiality. Participants must be assured that all information they give will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and that their anonymity will be respected at all times unless otherwise determined by law (for example, in the case of records maintained by the Prison Service). Where relevant, participants should be told about where information about them will be stored, who will have access to it, and what use will be made of it. Procedures for data storage must conform to the Data Protection Act. Express permission must be obtained for any non-confidential use of participant information. Express permission must also be obtained for access to specified information from confidential records, e.g. medical notes, or educational attainment records. Where relevant, any limitations to confidentiality (for example obligations under law, or where there may be a threat to self or others) must be explained.

Appropriate exclusion criteria. Recruitment of participants for a given study should apply exclusion criteria that protect the health and well-being of participants (for example, exclusion on the grounds of psychological vulnerability or a pre-existing medical condition).

Monitoring. Researchers are obliged to monitor ongoing research for adverse effects on participants and to stop the research if there is cause for concern about their well-being.

Duty of care. There is a duty of care on researchers to ameliorate any adverse effects of their research on participants (either personally or by referral to an appropriately qualified person). As a general rule, researchers should debrief participants at the end of the research either verbally or in writing.

Additional safeguards for research with vulnerable populations. Special safeguards need to be in place for research with vulnerable populations. Vulnerable populations include schoolchildren, people with learning or communication difficulties, patients in hospital or people under the care of social services, people in custody or on probation, and people engaged in illegal activities, such as drug abuse.
For example, research with vulnerable populations may require Criminal Records Bureau clearance; research with schoolchildren also requires that parents or guardians be informed about the nature of the study and the option to withdraw their child from the study if they so wish.

Appropriate supervision. Student investigators must be under the supervision of a member of Academic Staff. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the student is aware of relevant Guidelines and of the need to observe them.

How to obtain informed consent: In order that consent be 'informed', consent forms may need to be accompanied by an information sheet for participants setting out information about the proposed study (in clear and simple terms) along with details about the investigators and how they can be contacted. If applicable, this sheet may also make reference to any screening procedures, the confidentiality of the data, any risks involved, and any other points which participants might reasonably expect to know in order to make an informed decision about whether they wish to participate, and which are not included on the informed consent form.

A checklist of points on the informed consent form that participants are expected to sign might typically include: **(a)** That their participation is voluntary, **(b)** That they are aware of what their participation involves, **(c)** That they are aware of any potential risks (if there are any), **(d)** That all their questions concerning the study have been satisfactorily answered. Documented consent may be signed or initialled (if participants wish to maintain anonymity). In situations where information about the research and participant consent is conveyed verbally, it is recommended that the information be recorded on and read from or cued by a written information sheet; verbal consent should also be taped in order to provide a record.

Added safeguards may be required to obtain informed consent with vulnerable populations. For example, research with children in schools cannot take place without the permission of the head teacher and teacher responsible for the children. Where they are competent to give it, informed consent should also be obtained from the children themselves. In addition, parents or guardians should be given all relevant details of the study (in a letter) along with an opportunity to withdraw their child from the study if they so wish (passive consent). If the school requires it, parents may also be required to return signed consent forms (active consent).

This document is modified from the Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research, British Psychological Society http://www.bps.org.uk/downloadfile.cfm?file_uuid=2B522636-1143-DFD0-7E3D-E2B3AEFCACDE&ext=pdf

Further detailed recommendations regarding ethical considerations can be found in the Statement of ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association
http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm

Appendix 5: Interview Transcripts

1. A.: yeah, so I've been living in Germany for over 8 years, but originally I'm from Uzbekistan,
2. but I have a new father , I don't know how to say it I English, and we speak German at home
3. and with my sisters and brothers also.
4. no no, it's Russian and German. My German is better now than Russian.
5. In September.
6. Just these three oh and Latvian.
7. No, in Russian – it's Russian philology. Only a Latvian course in Latvian.
8. just one semester
9. I lived in Germany for a long time and we travelled together with my family around
10. Germany and to France and Belgium but this is the first experience for me being away from home for so long.
11. Of course, as I'm studying Russian philology and I was hoping to get some practice with that
12. here and to study in Russian. For me travelling is about exploring and learning about other
13. cultures and I'm open to that. I was able to learn German language and about German
14. culture, so I think being in Latvia is an extension for me of learning about other countries
15. and cultures.
16. Oh, I didn't know something before and it was interesting to see what's it like. And I was
17. surprised that… there are so many Russian in Riga and that there are so many people here
18. who understand Russian… And I think it's easier for me than for some other Erasmus
19. students because here people understand more Russian than English maybe, especially
20. older people, or even German sometimes.
21. A stranger… we have many foreigners in Germany, in Berlin, they want to see the country, to
22. learn about the country and the culture.
23. Oh, yeah, I live in Moscow forschtate, yeah, I like it so much, it reminds me of Uzbekistan, I
24. feel like I'm in Russia – something that I recognize… I really enjoy the buses … I like it very
25. much, I feel safe. Our accommodation is ok we are living in the third floor with all Erasmus
26. students on one floor On other floors – Latvian students and Russian, but we don't see
27. them, we have more contact with Erasmus students – I don't know why, maybe they are
28. very busy or something, we spend a lot of time together with Erasmus students.
29. Yeah, there is one girl from Germany and one guy from Poland – we go together to the
30. classes of ethnolinguistics and psycholinguistics – it's very interesting and it's in Russian.
31. Yeah, I have one roommate. She is also from Germany.
32. No, I think it's very nice! We are laughing a lot together. Our floor is very friendly and we are
33. having great time.

34. No, I have thought, but there is nothing at the university. I sometimes go to Goethe Instituut
35. or Maksavas Nama - I don't know how you say it. I was there yesterday. There was an
36. interview/ conversation with a writer. I've enjoyed it but it was strange …
37. there was even a priest who was giving his blessing for the books that were on sale there – I
38. thought it was strange. He was even singing a song… for me it seemed very strange why they
39. did this way. This lady who was speaking there she used to be a hairdresser, than she
40. became a designer and now she is writing books. But she didn't say much about her books.
41. But also there is such an organization at the University, ESN – they organize special events
42. for us – like watching films and parties like "the Arabian night", and the trips – to Vilnius, in
43. Lithuania and Stockholm in Sweden.
44. Yeah, I've been to Kongresu Nams – they had like a week when they were showing different
45. films – a kind of a film festival.
46. So we watched some old Italian film. Otherwise I haven't had much opportunity to do
47. something else – we haven't got much time and I've got to study as well. But we have
48. parties with Erasmus students a lot of times on Fridays, because it's the end of the week.
49. D.: have you met many Latvians or Russian?
50. A.: Not so many, apart from the teachers at the university, I had a Latvian buddy, she was a
51. Latvian girl, but unfortunately we don't meet so often, because we live very far away. We
52. live really separately fro the Latvian students – even our entrance is separate from theirs – I
53. find it really strange – like they don't want us to come into any contact with each other. We
54. were separated. Yeah, we say hi to each other, but that's it.
55. D.: And what sort of relations do you have with other Erasmus or other foreign student?
56. A.: Erasmus students are my friends. At first when I arrived I felt very strange because I
57. didn't know anyone, but then everyone had arrived and it became better. I came earlier
58. because there was a course – an intensive course of Latvian language at the end of August,
59. so we formed a little group and we felt really close and we started to form close bonds
60. among ourselves. Because none of us knew anybody outside the group, so it came natural
61. that we became good friends – it's special. We do everything together, we travel together,
62. to the seaside, to see things together, so we have really become friends here. We celebrate
63. birthdays together. Yeah, but there are some occasional problems, like for instance with
64. the caretakers, not with all of them, but with some. Because there are some who are not
65. friendly. They are angry with us for having fun – it doesn't disturb us, but it disturbs them.
66. For instance on Fridays, of course.

The student buddy I met later on. But ESN students organized a meeting for all of the Erasmus students, so they helped us to get to know each other better. And then we always talk to each other at the kitchen, that's how we got to know each other with other Erasmus students. Yeah, in the beginning it was unusual for me, I don't know how to put it - that, for instance in our country , in Germany it's common to say thank you and please everywhere, but here, for instance it's quite rare to hear things like that at the shops. I wouldn't call it rudeness, I don't remember anymore how it used to be in Uzbekistan - I was surprised. I got used to seeing people smile in the shops in Germany, the staff always ask how they can help you. Also at the university it's also different – at home it's all very theoretical and here they read more during the classes. For instance in Literature class we read a lot, every week we read several texts and then we discuss them, so then it seems more like practical tasks. For me it's really good, of course. I shouldn't forget my mother tongue. yeah, sure, now it feels as if like at home, but of course still, I know that it's a foreign country, but I feel more comfortable here now. I know where to go, where I can buy what I need. I felt this way after about 1,5 months of being here. I went back to Berlin in October for 3 days because I really wanted to see my family and I felt homesick, after that I didn't want to return to Latvia and it took me some time to get used to being here again, but now it's back to normal. I know that it's not for a long time and that I'm not that far away. I feel something between the tourist and near-citizen. Of course I haven't seen so much of this country. Like, I haven't been to Liepaja, for instance. Still I seem to be getting used to everything, it's hard to say…

And how would you describe what you've learned about this experience?

I wanted to get to know more about other countries. If education can offer such an opportunity, it's very interesting. We have many students at our university who didn't want to go anywhere. They were forced to go somewhere. But I understand that if they were refugees they didn't want to go back to Russia. It was better for them to chose another country. However, sometimes if people are not urged to go somewhere, they will probably not go. But it's so interesting for yourself, to discover a different world. You learn about patience, tolerance, you start comparing and you start thinking differently – it's an enriching experience!

98. And do you think that you have changed during this time here?
99. Definitely. I have become more open, more tolerant. Sometimes you don't like something,
100. you are angered by it, I don't even know how to put it correctly, but nevertheless it's an experience and it will be interesting to think and talk about it later. I have definitely
101. changed much more than if I had stayed at home. I can never forget this half a year that I've spent here.
102. How would you describe yourself in terms of your identity?
103. It's really complex. Now that I'm in Latvia I feel more like German, because I'm so
104. used to German customs, but in Germany I'm constantly comparing Germany and
105. Russia and or Uzbekistan. When I talk about it with my boyfriend in Germany, I talk about
106. myself as an Uzbekistani or Russian – it's very strange because when I'm here, I feel German.
107. It's interesting I keep jumping back and forth, as if when it's more suitable for me,
108. depending on the situation I opt for a more relevant identity : Russian or German. I don't
109. know why…
110. That's right! When we can't understand each other, that I'm.... in a Russian way...., than I try
111. to explain it to him that we have different upbringing, or different outlook on life... but still I
112. compare myself more with a German or with a Russian woman when I talk to Russians,
113. because I feel closer and what we have in common with them gets revealed... yeah erm...
114. but even now I don't know who I am in fact... It's difficult... it's a difficult situation.
115. I was hoping to improve my Russian and certainly that I will start learning Latvian. English,
116. it's not directly connected with my studies. I knew that Erasmus students, with Erasmus
117. students we will speak English. But it's also good that here I really started using English
118. actively. And I started learning Latvian here and I also like that because so much is
119. connected, not connected, but, so much is similar with the construction of suffixes in
120. Russian. Maybe that's why it's closer to me and therefore easier to learn. And Russian,
121. actually I use it more than I do in Germany, because there I can't use it as often.
122. I wanted to learn it just for me. Well when you live in a country it's awkward if you know
123. nothing of the local language. I wanted to follow an intensive course but didn't have such an
124. opportunity.

Yeah, it's a beginner course that runs twice a week 2 hours. It's basic, we talk about what we like, what we don't like. It's optional to follow this course – not compulsory. Who needs to get credit points or who needs extra credit points – can choose this course. The course started in September, the beginning of the term and it runs until the end of the term.

Definitely in English, because now I speak it more. In Latvian, of course too, because in the past I couldn't say anything, now I can say a few things, the easiest things, basic sentences that I can. I also started to speak Russian more – I had more opportunities than I do in Germany, because I only speak German, because my studies are in German, we only read in Russian, but we hardly ever speak, but it's a big difference!

Yeah, of course. Latvian language of course I have some problems to understand because it's too fast for me sometimes, but in Russian I have no problems. In Latvian it's juts sometimes, some words.

In the shops sometimes when I don't know all the words, I don't want to say it in Latvian , I don't want to speak in Latvian and I use Russian or English.

oh… hmmm… yeah, it's difficult to say something, because that's very subjective, but maybe what I've already said about the fact that people behave differently here – they say less "thank you " and "please", what else. I have also noticed that when I spoke Russian, not everybody liked it, but maybe they thought that I was local and I don't speak Latvian – maybe it was misunderstanding sometimes, but otherwise, I don't know…

there is more… closer to me, maybe I like it more, not because I didn't like it here, in Latvia, but it's closer to my perception of the world,. Or maybe because I respect Germany… I started to appreciate more the way we live in Germany, the human rights, for instance.

Because I start to notice more what I dislike, the same things as I disliked in Uzbekistan and Russia, there is a lot in common between the way people live there and here. I keep noticing it and compare it with Germany and I still think that the life is better in Germany and I start appreciating more what I have.

Sure, yes. I wouldn't have seen and not understood many things. When someone tells you

something, it’s different when you see it all in real life, with your own eyes, certain behavior of people you start understanding differently. Fantastic. I would certainly like to do it again sometime. I still haven’t seen so many things around here, because of the studies there is so little time to do things like that. If I have an opportunity to come back, I would definitely come back here. I like Riga a lot. K.: I guess the main thing that I had was that I went to Italy for 5 weeks for a summer holiday when I was an undergraduate, and so… we were in Sienna… but it was very different because the University of Toronto program so with all other Canadians together, so… We were living in a residence and of course there wasn’t a lot of work, just a lot of traveling, having fun and then we also took this modern Culture course… so which was good. So that was the longest time I’ve been away from home. Yeah Errr... Yeah, I think if I had never been to Europe before, I might have been more worried that I wouldn’t like being away for so long, but I think I was more influenced by my trip two years ago where I visited many places where my family has their history and my relatives in different parts of the country in Latvia. And it was after my first trip to Latvia, that’s when I became interested in Latvian history and I followed several courses at the university of Toronto on history. They have full time head of Estonian studies but he does also all the Baltic states. He is paid by the Estonian-Canadian community and so from the undergrad courses there is a hansiatic history course, that is from the hansiatic league, ok, the medieval time history and also Modern Baltic History and then I also… even before my trip to Latvia I have taken a Baltic Folklore Course which was good. We looked at the music and folk works and calendar and and the “dainas” and then in my MA programme originally I was planning on doing French corneology program, since I have the French language already, but than I sort of I felt because of my family history and and other reasons, like Baltic history being underrepresented that I was interested to do that instead so I thought that it would be interesting to…. But I have to learn Latvian if I want to get accepted to a PhD program in

Baltic history I'm going to have to have Latvian knowledge already because. That's my plan.
Sometimes I'm not sure if I actually…. Sometime I am discouraged in not knowing whether
it's working and how much I still have to do…
I found the program on the internet and I saw that they had a study program in English
about the Baltic Sea region studies.
I guess it was interesting to me because the director of my program ******* has been to
the University of Toronto as a guest speaker, so I've met him before and there was someone
familiar and I liked him, so I thought that if he was so good, the program should be good. So
that was a big influence and I mean… I have looked at other programs at this university and
none of them really seemed appropriate being at the MA level and studying in English and
doing history. But I didn't look on the like Latvijas Univesrity of Agriculture. I didn't think to
look at other universities.
yeah, 2,5 years in the summer.
before I ever came here? I guess it's different question for me than for most, because I'm
Latvian, so I have been exposed to Latvian my whole life, and I guess…
Well, yes, mostly my relatives and some of my friends are Latvian and I've been to Latvian
fraternity events, where they would be like singing Latvian Christmas songs and there would
be a Latvian Santa Claus and we would eat Latvian food and … I never I wasn't sent to the
language courses as a child, unfortunately but and even still there is a pretty big Latvian
community in Toronto, so… but when I first visited Riga and than decided that wanted to
come back, I generally had the impression that Latvians seemed like… like… really fun people
and I think now, being here I have a slightly different impression, they seem to be more
serious… maybe that's because of the summer vacation time but… and maybe because in
the summer there were a lot of tourists? But I liked it that there were so many people out on
the street and I thought people dressed nice and overall I had a positive impression and in
the countryside of course life was really different…
How would you define a foreigner? Yeah… well, I guess a foreigner would be one… maybe if you'd been in a country ten years, than you wouldn't be a foreigner but …

206. It's the length of stay, and also knowing the language and being able to speak the language
207. in such a way that you could maybe blend in … I mean in Canada, if someone arrived in
208. Canada at the age of 10 than by the age of 20, they would be almost completely assimilated.
209. I don't know if it would be different here? In Canada there is a lot of immigration and
210. there's… in Canada, I guess, everyone is a sort of a "foreigner" from another country.
211. There's a Latvian family in Toronto, who own an apartment here, who lets me live in their
212. apartment for free as a housekeeper and I'm their guest. I'm not sharing with anyone – it's
213. just me. So, in my building there are a lot of Latvians but I think it would be different if I'd
214. been a Latvian resident but I don't really have so much interaction with other people in the
215. building, unless, I run into my next door neighbor in the hall, because she speaks English
216. and I can talk to her in English and… I actually baby sit for my nephew twice a week, so I see
217. their family quite regularly. He is 8 years old and he only speaks Latvian. So the reason that I
218. wanted to baby sit him was so that I could practice. But it's kind of hard, because he is a
219. child and it's not like I constantly listening to children talking and interacting, it's more
220. between me and him. I think it's helped but it's not helped as much as when I've been in
221. situations where my whole family are interacting and I can hear everyone talking Latvian,
222. then it would've been even more useful. Also, again since my program it's almost all
223. Latvians sometimes, they all tell me about their lives and sometimes they talk Latvian in
224. front of me and I can sort of follow them, but not join really the conversation. I think these
225. are the main way I've immersed… so…
226. Mmm, not I tried but I couldn't there is this dancing group, they meet on Tuesday nights at
227. club 11 with other Erasmus people that I have met and there is this other girl, half Latvian,
228. half German, so she had invited me to go, so that was interesting and that was fun, but the
229. problem was that there were so many more girls than guys, that it really wasn't suitable in
230. terms of dance partners, so if somebody would come with you, you would have dance with

them, so they didn't want to go anymore. I also wanted to join this group that sort of
dancing folklore but because I am in this program in the evening and all my classes are in the
evening and it makes it quite difficult for me to join.
I have been recently to the Ethnographic museum for a on a Lacplesa diena. Sorry it was not
Lacplesa diena, but Martina diena and they had a sort of a folk theatre and dancing thing we
watched and I sang to the national anthem****** Sometimes I watch Latvian TV but not
that often, because I am not that type who watches TV that often, generally. I think that I
don't watch that much TV anyway and I only watch it if they want to watch it, but I'm less
likely to be in this situation if I'm at home, I'd rather read, or get early to bed or rather talk.
For a while I had myself wake up to this Latvian radio station that had songs in Latvian, but
then I lost this radio channel and I can't find it anymore, it's frustrating.
yeah, I have my nephew, who is 8 years old and his parents and grandparents and other
relatives. One relative we went to a date last weekend and then I have this relative in
Gaujena, whom I've visited last time I came to Latvia and I hope to visit again in semester
two and then, like many different people that I've met in my program so… and there is one
girl in my program, like a Real Latvian who has invited me to stay with her parents and we
went sailing once and went on a day trip to Kuldiga so I've met three of her friends who are
Latvians. A lot of the Erasmus students would be taking one or two of these Master's course,
but I have been with them every single day, so you kind a get to know each other. And this
weekend I'm going to a conference in Kaunas and then there will be two other Latvians and
one other Erasmus guy going. We will be there all weekend.
Yeah, yeah. Some Erasmus people and some MA program people and I mean and I guess the
Erasmus people, they are totally… they're probably a totally different age group than me so
but even like I'm 25 and they are anywhere between, I guess 20 to 23 but of course it's
about the same.
Yeah, I think in my group it' more like maybe 23, 24, 25 – it's approximately the same. But
there are some Erasmus people who are younger, a lot younger, like they wouldn't be on a

master's courses with me, so I'm less likely to have met them.
I guess than, when I first got here, my program director was the really welcoming. He gave
me a walk around. I'm the first person on this program who is not from the EU, like there
have been other non-Latvians, but people from Lithuania or something but there have never
been people from so far. I think he figured it out that I'd be freaking out a little, so but that
was in the very beginning. Then I guess just people on my program.
It's not like…In Toronto it's more like the graduate community spend A LOT like a lot of time
together and there are a lot of club nights and other activities to sort of encourage the grad
students to make friends and have a community and when I first got here I was expecting
something similar, but it's really different, because the Latvian MA students have to work
full time during the day and than at night they go to class so they don't have as much time
for socializing. But even still they've been pretty good those people…The director at the very
beginning was kind of welcoming, he was the first contact when I got here, so it wasn't
just like sitting in my apartment and feeling err…
Oh with my family and then… the first two weeks like for the first month I was really really
lonely and I think it was especially hard because I wasn't ***** by other students. So just
getting used to living on my own and like at first I have been around the Erasmus students.
They were talking there own language, like ,German usually, but than I found more and
more they got used to talking English, to try and have a more including feeling. But at first it
was a lonely feeling and I wanted to leave and I didn't want to… I guess, I think right after
about, just over a month, then I was liking it better and than I had some visitors who came
to see me from Toronto, my parents came, than later my brother came, my friend who is
Latvian, from Toronto came. That's been good, but I guess one of the downsides to that is
that I would be away for so much and sort of when I came home it would be crazy – so
much, so much work to get caught up on and I don't want it to be… like the new friends I've
made here too… It's gotten busier, much busier!
Yeah…here now it's always like I've got to go and do the next thing! The babysitting, the

language course… and now I've also just started teaching at a language course English for Latvians. I've only done it once so far, but it's going to continue, so it's just another thing. So, it's probably better for me to be busy here. In Toronto we have to work a lot for our program, but here since the program is based on the people who work full time, we don't have to do that much work, so I have time to do other things. resident, resident. I would say a residence permit and I'm going to be here for the rest of the year. Survivor sounds like I'm in some sort of a wasteland or something. Well, I guess there are a lot of different things, there is… more like… I think I've learned a lot about the culture and the way people's mentalities are, like the attitudes. About like Russian – Latvian relations has been a big theme. It's always in my course and people talking, and the EU and what it means to the people has been interesting, especially because for the Erasmus students from the West, like from the Germany and such, they think the Latvians that now they are in the EU they are only thinking that oh, now we've got the money and they don't have that feeling of like the community and the Latvians think that that a lot more western view that a lot of people are like foolishly idealistic if they think about other, than, principally, money, so … just also I find that it's a hard-working society, like my nephew has to do so much homework, even though he is only 8. If I was babysitting an eight-year-old in Canada, than I would be like, playing games and stuff, playing soccer, but with him I have to… it's not so much that he is serious, it's also what his parents expect from him and what the school expects from him. And I know that he's gotten into trouble at school when he was playing when it was time to work and his parents said that the teachers think that he doesn't take school seriously enough, yet when I babysitting him or take him out to take lunch. He says, Ok, I've got to go to study now, to master English homework, and all kinds of stuff like that, so and also he washes all the dishes himself and if I try washing them, then he will say No. And there is just thins expectation that the child should wash the dishes and it's the opposite of what's it like in Canada, where the children are very free and wild and if

they are being babysat, they will look at it as an opportunity to go wild, like go completely
wild, jump on the babysitter, not wash any dishes and be very difficult. But it's even the fact
that the students at school have to take day classes, I mean day work and night classes they
are very very hard working and I think it's a part of being in a country which has been
rebuilding so much that people have to work harder than anyone else. I don't know, or
maybe it's a different kind of work, but it makes it impossible for the university to be at the
same level as a Canadian university, because people can't put most of their time into their
work.
No no, people combine the two in Canada, but it's just that it's more likely if people work
full-time, they study part time, take two courses, they wouldn't take FIVE! And either work
full time and school part-time or school full-time and work part-time but not work full time
and it's just… when my friend stayed with me, she got together with her cousins here and
one of them works two 40 hour a week job and like that… quite a lot… he is not studying
too, but it's a lot of hours to work a week!
Basically, no time for anything. When I met her and she heard that I'm studying here, she
thought that I was some sort of a goofball, like I'm not working enough and I'm here and I
have so much free time and she almost… Yeah, to some degree that's partly why I'm
babysitting my nephews. I don't want to feel like I'm just doing nothing and others are
working so hard on other things that I should do too and help the family.
yeah, I'm sure. I was kind of planning all for the last year that I would be coming here. If I
hadn't come here, than I would have been working at a full time job in Toronto, that would
have been different and I would be with all my old friends and my boyfriend in Canada, all
kinds of stuff like that but here it's like ***** being away, I don't know anybody or
anything…
I knew barely any Latvian. Like I knew enough so that they put me in lower – intermediate
instead of the beginner course, because I started learning from the book myself, just this
book over here and then, but I also planned to take Russian as a beginner in semester 2,

because for the Baltic history, I'd need to know that. Err... , I think it will be here. I know it's
awkward in semester two. Semester two in my program , I have to continue Latvian as a side
course and than maybe to take whatever Russian they are offering to my program, which I
have a feeling will be putting me together with a few other Erasmus students, because all of
the Latvians in my course already know and speak Russian so…In September, yeah.
I think, I think it's definitely improved a lot, but not as much as I would have thought, but I
knew that languages are hard to learn. The only thing I could relate too was learning French
which I did in an immersion, from a small child, so it's completely different and than took
German at UoT, but it was German for reading knowledge and I felt that that was a lot more
intense and we had a lot more… and I don't know if it was more work or it was more hard
translating work, where you have to sit down for an hour and now we are making like a
small essay about our house and it's more like about us generating like text, or us speaking
and not just translating and I think it's pretty good. I mean I can't compare it to anything else
to really, so I think it's but I really really like the Latvian professor, Benita. The other, the
other person who could have been teaching our class, is supposed to be really bad and
Benita even said, make sure you are in my section, but the other one she doesn't speak
English, she just speaks Latvian and German, so they can only put German students in her
section, but even for the German students in her section, they said that they haven't learned
anything new since the intensive summer program and it's all **** I didn't take the summer
program, I studied from the book, I could join the upper group. I thought that it would
challenge me instead of doing the same thing again, yeah.
I'd say English, than Latvian, than I guess but I talked French, like three times. German, I'm
supposed to understand, but I can't understand that well.
I mostly speak English with everyone.
I mostly speak English unless it's with my nephew and he doesn't speak much English…
I really don't we realistically we don't really like have a conversation in Latvian, we mostly
just speak English.

Shop assistants and bus drivers – I always talk Latvian.
Ehm, I hope to talk to my grandmother when I go home for Xmas and and other relatives in
Canada and hope to visit some other relatives throughout Latvia, but that will be in two
months' time. They will be gone for January.
Yeah, I often talk Latvian but people don't understand because of my accent and and or
grammatical errors, but I still try, but a lot of times they get frustrated and if they know
English, they'd rather speak English, but if they don't speak English, they don't have a
choice… I think … I'm sure I had a felling that maybe it's better for me just not to talk at all,
but I can't remember when I was in that situation. But I guess at first, when I first got here,
like if I was like at the central market… I tried for people not to… and I tried to cast off as
Latvian as possible to avoid being ripped off and but it wouldn't always work, like because
many people who work at the central market they weren't even Latvian, if they are Russian,
and of course their Latvian would not be as good and I'm pronouncing it bad, so it's hard, it's
tough.
Ehm, I consider I'm good , I'm alright when I go, I know how to say –cik tas maksa and all
that staff.
yeah, well, ok many things about the Latvian culture, what I have already said earlier and
I've learned more about Turkey, where I've never met anyone from Turkey before and now
I've met a couple of people from there and they have been more people are more Western
than I've expected. There aren't a lot of Turkish people in Toronto that I know, but there ar
e Germans and….
Oh, yeah! I feel like in Canada, they rip us off on everything. Like everything is so expensive
in Canada. I know that in Latvia things are less expensive than in Canada, but I even from
talking to other German friends and things how much it costs to go to the movies, it costs
literally twice that much to do that in Canada. And even taking currency exchange rates, like
our food and our movies, it's like someone is making a huge profit on everything, so that's…
In Canada… obviously, for Latvia, you'd expect that like there would be a big difference in

391. currency, just especially compared to Europe, Europe in general, but from what I heard, it
392. feels like, it seems like things are really expensive in Canada and it will be hard to readjust to
393. when I get back.
394. Oh, I don't think in Canada people like people can get away with getting *** their parents
395. will keep providing things for kids when they are older and here maybe you are 20, 22 years
396. old and you have to provide everything for yourself because the older generation are less
397. likely to have enough money, because of the Soviet period and all and people while they are
398. young are likely to have better jobs than their parents do and they are just, people can
399. afford to be a lot more free and less responsible in Canada, but here, here like people have
400. to be very responsible and hardworking, so that's another thing that I have noticed.
401. Yeah, I guess, pretty much everything I have already said, I don't think I can add anything
402. more.
403. No, because in Canada , it's multicultural. You would meet other cultures. You won't meet
404. immigrants from Germany in Canada, because no new immigrants come over. Even from
405. Latvia. Because there are Latvians in Canada, Latvians who came in the 50's, so that's very
406. different from today's Latvians, so I wouldn't have met these people and heard any of their
407. experience.
408. I don't know if I can reduce everything to one word. But maybe surprising?
409. N.: I'm from the United States but I go to the University in Canada and I'm doing an
410. exchange program – it's a part of the Erasmus anyway.
411. It's English.
412. I arrived here, in Latvia in August, in the middle of August, so I think around August 15.
413. Spanish
414. Yeah, that's right, though not many people know any second language in the States.
415. I learned Spanish from the elementary school through to the university. And I spent 1 month
416. in Mexico last summer as a part of my university project. I worked speaking Spanish too. I
417. did phone interviews using Spanish. So it's at least good enough for that.
418. Yeah, all my studies are in English. And my Latvian language classes.
419. Oh, until next summer (for two terms)
420. I've been to Mexico for 1 month and Argentina for 2 weeks. And before this, err my

university, the University of Toronto, has the summer classes all around the world. So I took
the summer classes at central Europe, and we went to Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary and
Poland. It was a 5 weeks program and we spent 1 week in each place. It was a professor
from the University of Toronto did a history course on Central Europe, so we learned some
things about the history and saw the place of the history.
I study European Studies and Latin-American Studies, so Europe and Latin-America.
History, politics, culture, yeah, languages are required for both. Spanish, of course for Latin-
American studies. Spanish or Portuguese and one of the European languages.
Oh, well, I sort of … one semester of French and Spanish…
Yeah, I think so… In Latin-America I was with my family and during the trip around Central
Europe I was with my classmates.
Yeah, well, not so much work experience abroad… I've been working a little bit in Latvia, but
rather than that not very much work experience.
Err… I write about one article per month for an English language magazine, called the City
Paper, which is a very bad magazine, they sell it in hotels.
various things I wrote about the real estate, I wrote about customer service. It's very good
for my studies and it helps me understand what's going on in the country as well.
well, I don't know the web page isn't very good, but I could get you, you know, a copy.
yeah, I think so, yeah. Well, maybe not my choice of Latvia, but they influenced my view
here, my experience here. So I sort of had a better idea of what to expect. A better idea of
what to expect(2x)… I mean, having been in Central Europe – it's not all too different
culturally than it's here, I find, but there are still some big differences, that I find here, at
least coming from the United States, it's err, it's helped me to prepare for coming here, at
least I had a taste of everywhere around.
It means, I think travelling represents the things that everybody… I mean… it's very
interesting to travel places and see how other people live their daily lives and that's really
sort of… humbling seeing that there are so many people in the world living so many different
lives. We don't see them and we don't know how different and how similar their lives are.

449. my grandmother went to the United States from Latvia in the Second World War. My
450. mother is here right now (laughs). She is here twice a year. She works on the National
451. Library of Latvia project. Yeah. So it was sort of a family, family link.
452. No, not so much the university link. And I really like to learn Latvian as well. Because my
453. grandmother lives with our family, in our family house and my mother and grandmother
454. speak Latvian together, but they never taught me as a child.
455. My father is an American. And it was just…I don't know she just never taught me. But they
456. speak Latvian together (with grandma)…
457. Which actually really helps me understand when the people are speaking, because I sort of
458. grown up listening to it, so even that I don't understand it, but…
459. I'm used to it and I think Latvian is a beautiful language.
460. Well, I've been here before once, but it was in 1992, being a small child and it was a very
461. different time. So coming here I had some very vague memories of very strange dark places,
462. so... It was… I definitely didn't expect this because when I was here, there were still huge
463. bread lines and still everybody was so unhappy and looking down all the time and snow and
464. … and now it's completely, I mean almost up to the standards with the Western Europe. So,
465. so I think, I was expecting something a little bit different, I mean, I knew it's come a long
466. way, but it's very impressive. I was here 15 years ago.
467. A foreigner a foreigner… it was probably the time hmm…
468. Yeah, I do, I certainly feel like a foreigner here. I would probably define someone as a
469. foreigner if you ask them where they are from and they would say somewhere other than
470. where they are. So, I think that a lot of Russian speaking people here are not foreigners.
471. They were born here, and even if they speak Russian, because they identify with Latvia,
472. because they speak Russian they are not foreigners in Latvia, because they are foreign in
473. Russia. So, I think a foreigner is if you identify with a certain place and you live in a different
474. place than where you are from.
475. I live in Sarlotes iela. Do you know where Vidzemes tirgus is, it's right across the street. It's a
476. small street that goes off from Brivibas. It's quite central. It's about 25 minute walk to the…
477. yeah, and I'm renting with other foreigners. The … no… one of them is a graduate student

studying the European studies. They came for the graduate program, so they are Masters at
the Economics faculty. And the other two work. One is from Spain and the other one is … he
was born in Kazakhstan, but then moved to the US and speaks Russian (laughs).
Well, my mother told me to stay away from the university accommodation – Maskachka!
And so, my mother understood that it wasn't a very good part of town and very far away
and not very nice residents.
most of my classes are just here, in this building.
No, I'm not, but I do write for a paper.
I've been to a concert, but it wasn't Latvian, it was an American folksinger, who came here
with a concert at the Arena Riga. But I haven't been, I mean… many of my friends are
Latvians from the graduate program, but I don't, I don't really… other than Andrej
sala…hmm nothing much more than that…
yeah, my friends here are my flat mates, who are also American and my Latvian study mates.
I also have my mother here at the moment and many of my relatives from my mother's side
live here, so we meet with them from time to time.
The last time I was in Latvia, it was in 1992 and I was absolutely astonished how much things
have changed here since that time. So, I guess I was shocked by the tremendous change that
took place over these 15 years. But what was a cultural shock for me it's the level of
education here, at the university. I think the requirement are really too low, which is not
motivating for me, studying at the post grad level. Clearly, it's partly due to the fact that
many people combine work and study – they don't have time to prepare, to study
independently and that's a shame, because the only information that they get is from the
lectures, they don't have time to search elsewhere. It's very different in North American.
And it's something that I'm really disappointed in.
Yes, you can say so. I'm happy with my flat mates, who are Americans too and we share our
observations of life in Latvia – I find our long discussions really good and helpful to make
sense of my own experiences here – it's a kind of psychotherapy, probably (laughs). I must
have felt "adapted" after some 3 months of living in Riga and now I feel something in-
between the "survivor" and a "resident".

I've learned about my roots – which was very important for me. I got to know my Latvian side of the family, who both my grandmother and my mother and myself belong to. I have learned quite a bit, both in lectures and by living here, about life in Eastern Europe, its peculiarities and its specificity, compared to what I know about the Western and Central Europe and the North America. Now I'm more of a Latvian American and I am strongly aware of that, compared to my being just a North American before coming here. I certainly cannot say that I'm Latvian, to say that I'm missing a fundamental part of life that would have to have taken place in Latvia, when so many of the national, cultural basis are being formed. This part of life I spent in the US. However, now having lived here, having met Latvians, my Latvian part of me have come alive, I can say.

I really planned to learn Latvian intensively. As I return to the States, I want to be able to speak Latvian to my mother and grandmother. I have joined a Latvian course at the faculty of Economics and on top of that 4 times a week together with my American flat mate we have private lessons with a qualified teacher of Latvian. I'm really investing a lot of time, money and effort into learning Latvian, as you can see. I expect to be fluent at it by the end of my stay here. well… I think I avoid Russian speaking people, because I'm always wondering whether they speak English or Latvian. Because so many of them don't speak neither Latvian nor English, especially the older generation… Otherwise, with the Latvians, I may not be able to communicate the more complex things, but anyhow, I always try first and if I can't express what I have to, I switch to English or just keep trying in Latvian.

No, I don't think so. I just understand that these are two different worlds that I belong to , and I see them as separate from each other.

most certainly. I have learned and experienced so many of the authentic Latvian traditions – something that I'd only heard of from my mother and grandmother while growing up. I have lived and observed the Latvian lifestyle, its music, people, festivals, symbols – all of it was new for me, of course. Now my mother's and grandmother's conversations make much

more sense for me than they ever did before.
Great!
L.:

What I do during the day... something like that. Usually, don't know I wake up at 7 and then I
have my breakfast and then I go for my practice and and have my dinner, then I sometimes
meet with my friends and we go to the cinema or to bars in weekends and twice a week I
have classes, only Russian, because last semester I took many lectures so now I don't have to
take so many classes because I have enough credit points, so I stay in my dormitory, I speak
with my Estonian friends on Skype.
Ok, last weekend, I went out with my friends. We usually go to French bar in the old town–
but it's so crowded and so small, so you can't stay their the whole evening and then we go
to different bars and basically we stay in the old town and don't go outside the old town. I
didn't know why all the exchange students go there – it's like some kind of a meeting point
or I don't know. It's a really small but lots of people go there. The place is so small and if you
are really drunk then you don't have to worry that you can fall, because it's so small and so
crowded. Err , yes it's different because I cannot speak in my native language so but I was
really Latvia, so last semester there was one girl from the States so yeah, I practice my
English a lot, I think, compared to my homeland, I have to be here a lot more independent
and so, I don't have my family here, who I can count on, so I have to meet new friends and
it's like really different to how your friends and family are like. It's like there so many things
you have to do but you don't know how. But yeah it's a really good experience and to meet
other nationalities and to learn more about other people and their countries, yeah, it's really
useful…
Yeah it's really different, because lots of people are from Italy and Spain and also from
Georgia and you know those countries but you don't know about the people who live there,
so that's nice. No it's completely different. Maybe when I moved out from my home town to
another town in Estonia it was also different, but it's like huge different, because you have

560. to do everything in a language which is not your native language but this is totally new
561. experience for me, I cannot say that I've had a similar experience before. It's really different
562. but it's good different, not bad different , so it's good and really useful. Yes because I meet
563. different people, and if I go to travel, then I can always ask, what I to see in these countries.
564. People are useful, it's useful information and useful is also this independence thing, it's like
565. really useful, you get out of your really convenient life. You don't know , I didn't know when
566. I came here, I didn't know what to expect and I thought it's more difficult, but no, you just
567. have to be more open-minded and. At first it was more difficult but after some days if you
568. make some new friends and it's not…if you know what's going on, I think in another country
569. if you know how the public transportation works and like this… for the first time it's like this,
570. but now I know the city almost. Maybe because I know Russian, so if people don't speak any
571. English, I can speak Russian, it is easier. Some things are similar to Estonia, but I don't know.
572. So people ask me : so you are from Estonia, so you know Latvian. No, I don't and it's in some
573. points it is similar but in some points it's new for me also.Yeah, they think that people are
574. the same, but they are different. Well, food is similar, but also different. And things are
575. similar but different, like, you know some things are similar but different. I feel like I am not
576. in Estonia, like I am in another country.
577. Yes, I think that for Erasmus students, teachers don't expect so much from you and it's not
578. like school. But "life school"… experiences study is, but it's like not so important like it's
579. here, I think it's a great opportunity to learn about yourself more and about other people
580. and expand you knowledge and … I think that people don't hear about the studies but more
581. I think it's a great opportunity to live and study.
582. No. I haven't been disappointed but I think that…Yeah maybe not so happy, because of
583. people, because they are different, because, I don't know, like Latvian and Russians, they
584. are, compared to Estonians, they are more rude, like you have to make your way to the
585. trolleybus and you way out by pushing – that's really different, but if you are at the market,

they are really polite and maybe it depends on which region of Riga you are, on the other
hand, they are so Move, Move! But that's about the difference about anything else. About
being here, I'm not like: I want to go back to Estonia! I go there twice a month and also…
when I first came here, I had a contract only for one month, but when I came here, I wanted
to stay longer, I received another scholarship. And well, if I have to choose, to stay in Estonia
or to stay in Latvia, I think, I would prefer to stay here, because I think it's may be because
it's bigger, more opportunities and I really like Tallinn and my home town but I really think I
like it because more people. No not as an exchange student, but I have been in lots of towns
here before. Yeah, to be honest, I didn't have a lot of expectations because I didn't know
what to expect. just I came here I thought if it's really bad, then I can always go home and
the first days were very difficult, because when I was in Estonia and thinking, I was so calm:
ok, tomorrow I will go, it's Riga and… and when I first came here I thought: oh, what am I
doing here and then I realized, ok, I'm here now and my life is here. I don't regret it and I
can't imagine that I would live in Spain and something like that, maybe one reason that it's
similar to my home and I don't, I 'm not so homesick here, whereas if I went to Spain and I
couldn't go home and visit my friends and my family, then I would be really homesick, but
here it's if I want I can go back, only four hours. I learned Latvian also for the first semester,
but I don't know maybe I'm too old for a new language. Because I think Latvian is pretty
difficult and to remember it and learning a new language through English is also difficult,
because I don't understand some English words, so I have to check what they mean and
then translate it too, yeah, it's a triple translation. And after that I didn't speak any Latvian,
so I forgot… last semester I had Russian, Latvian and Baltic sea region studies and this
semester because of my practice I only took Russian, but I hear a lot of Latvian at my
workplace… when I listen to them, then I recognize some words, but I can't speak it. It is
easier to speak in English or in Russian. Yes, from the Soviet Union times we had to study it

611. at school, but it's all about practice, so I came over here.
612. For me, I don't drink a lot. I go out with them. I drink with them, I drink beer or some shots
613. with them, but usually you go out and you meet other exchange students from different
614. universities and people are just having fun and taking pictures and some are really drunk,
615. exactly you can have a good time without doing yourself completely a fool there.
616. Last semester the most important person was my roommate from States but now hmm, I
617. think one German guy but he is also from last semester so I know him and a lot of people
618. left at the end of the first semester, so now I haven't made a lot of new friends because I
619. have my practice and I don't have a lot of time. When I go out then I meet new people, but
620. I don't go out a lot, because after my practice I'm tired and sometimes we do some things
621. together but not so often like in the first semester but yeah, there is this German guy and
622. one Italian guy but who also went back to Italy after the first semester and he misses Riga so
623. much. So, he is like: I want to come back! He really liked Riga and also because of the
624. exchange students and having fun here and it's nice. Yes, it's…
625. I have some good friends and I speak to them and I share my secrets with them.
626. Ok, when I cam here, then my roommate new others from states, as they went to the same
627. school so after we met, we went out and to the university to register ourselves and we met
628. lots of other exchange students and went out and met some new friends. But I think people
629. also meet in the halls if there is an Erasmus event or they gather together and these are
630. some basic things. And my Latvian friends – there was one programme – couple learning –
631. you have a partner and you teach them a language you know and I had three students,
632. Latvian students, who were studying Estonian, so they are, basically, my only Latvian friends.
633. No, not this semester, I don't know why. But last semester we met two or three times a
634. week. We always met at a cafeteria and it was nice and we had some coffee and speaking
635. Latvian and in Estonian. It was like a volunteer. Yes, I still keep in touch and we plan to meet
636. again, but I had to do some work and we haven't met this semester, but I have been so busy
637. with my things. And they are so good at Estonian. So, she writes letters to me letters in

Estonian and I correct and send them back. Hmm, to be honest no one. Because if I need
something, like go to library, then I use internet like Google and then I go to the library and
ask how it works here and then I ask from my friends. Like if I can't go to Russian, then I ask
them what they did and daily things, I think I don't meet no one. I can't ask so much. Usually
if I have a problem, I solve them by myself. I use Internet Google if I need something – it's a
really good way to solve problems.
No, alone. I'm in dorm, but when my roommate left I thought they would put someone else
in my room, but no, I'm alone. It's… at first it was really good, but now I'm used to it.
Sometimes I miss my roommate, but it's good to watch my shows without earphones. It's
like, it's more private, it's yes, but sometimes I miss talking to her, but on the other hand I
like being alone. But I think, maybe it depends on my mood. For example, if I don't have so
good mood, then I need someone to be there but if I'm in a good mood – I don't. I usually
talk with that German guy, or from my dormitory, from Reznas, we usually go to Riga to have
dinner with Italians, that cheers me up, or I speak with my friends on Skype, so it's a great
thing. I am really trying to be the same person but maybe it's not always working, because in
my home country I wasn't like a party people, and here not also not too much. And a lot of
my friends said that they don't drink so much in their home country and they drink here a lot
and I really don't like to drink a lot so I'm trying to be the same person. Yeah, I think that I
didn't come here to party or something like that, but I came here with my own vision, with
what I want to do here, so I think I am basically the same person. I still have my goals and
aims and dreams. Others, they are different when they are dunk. When people are in big
groups, then they are acting differently, but when you are speaking with him or her then
they are more calm and they open themselves more, yeah, they are different, but I think it's
in every case in life. People are more polite when two people together, then they are not so
crazy, but if there is a huge group, then they all want attention or something like that –

663. crazy. Sometimes it's nice but sometimes you get tired of that of all this, I don't know, noise
664. and you want privacy – go to my room, by on my own.
665. Yes, they, the closest people are on my Skype and on Facebook, yeah, I think it's really nice if
666. you know people from different countries – also the traveling things, you can always ask
667. them and I can also be useful if they want to go to Estonia – what to see there. And lots of
668. people have asked what to see in Tallinn and in Estonia.
669. No, only my roommate. Estonia is so close that lots of people go there and lots of people ask
670. how much it is there, what are the prices and where to sleep and what to see. For me it's
671. easier, because if they use Internet, not everything in English and you get lost.
672. Yeah, at first it was more exciting, but when you do it once, three, four, five times. And I
673. study Geoecology and when people ask what it is about it's hard to explain what it is and
674. when you start to explain, so finally when people ask, I just say it's Geography. I just get tired
675. of explain what is Geoecology. And then everyone ask this question: "Oh, you came here and
676. you are from Estonia" - "yeah , yeah, that's true". At first I was telling all why I came here
677. and where I am from and you talk less about you but if people are interested, you speak
678. more about yourself. Now it's not like this but in the first semester it was more like this:
679. Yeah, I come from Estonia and came here because of that that… Yeah, I don't really speak so
680. much. But some people , who because they have interest, then we talk more and they know
681. more about me and I about them. You want to explain everything but after 5 times you are
682. so tired, but then I like to hear about other people all these things, because it gives me more
683. interest about the country, like last semester I had some good friends from Spain, so I went
684. to Spain to see the country, so I went to their hometown and they were like: oh, yeah, and
685. did you like it, did you like it? And I did learn about them more and I went to see it and you
686. expend our knowledge. I'm that kind of people. And why other people came here, to Riga – I
687. thought nobody want to come here, to Riga, to Italy or something like that, especially the
688. people from Spain, where it's warm they come here and it's really cold to them. I think that

689. people are really happy here. I haven't heard it, no one has told me that they don't like it
690. here. I think everyone likes it.
691. I have a lot thoughts, but the main thing is that like a strong person, who can survive in a
692. different country, but about the world… maybe like when you are in your home and you
693. think about other countries, then they seem so far away and so different, but when you
694. meet the people, they are not so different… well some people are… Spanish people, they are
695. really different, but you learn more about their culture and their traditions, but it doesn't
696. seem, these countries don't seem so far way now you know more about them. It's really
697. hard to explain, but I think mostly, it's stronger person, you really don't have anyone to
698. depend on and you make your own decisions and you have to be patient and you don't
699. know how do the things work but you get to learn and understand – it's really interesting.
700. I take photos. Last semester we were traveling a lot with my roommate. We visited many
701. cities and towns in Latvia and I really like to take the pictures of nature. And we went to
702. Rundales pils and it was really nice, so I took a lot of pictures there. So, basically the pictures
703. of nature and the buildings…Not really of people… I have a really big camera, so I don't really
704. want to carry it around with me when I go out. Yeah when we were traveling here, I took
705. some pictures and when we were walking here, I took some pictures of buildings and nature,
706. but I don't carry my camera with me all the time.
707. To be honest, my relationship with my friends in Estonia, it's better, because it's… now I see
708. how important I am to them, because now they are asking me: *When are you coming back*?
709. *When are you coming back*? Because when I am with them, you don't feel that you are
710. important, but now it's like: *I miss you, please, come back*.
711. And it's better. And now when I go to Estonia for the weekends, we always meet with my
712. closest friends and go to have dinner together and something like that and talk what
713. someone has done in their life. They think that I'm crazy that I came here, because in Estonia
714. I was working and I quit my job to come here, but I wasn't happy in my job, so for me it was

715. a really good decision and I don't regret anything. But they were like*: Are you crazy? You've*
716. *quit your job and now it's the economic crisis and something like that*. But I was like: *I don't*
717. *care, I just want to come here* and they don't think bad things, but they think that I'm crazy
718. that I came here, but not in a bad way, just from where you get the bravery to come here,
719. something like that. They only say that my Estonian is not so good anymore, because when
720. we usually go out, because I speak English every day, so sometimes I just say some words in
721. English, so they are like: *oh, sorry, sorry*! They are just doing things like that, but they are not
722. saying that I am different, just the same person!
723. No, I don't regret anything, maybe my living place it's not so good, but one the other hand I
724. don't want to spend so much money on an apartment. I usually say to myself: you have
725. everything that you need yeah, and other things. I see myself here, I don't see myself in
726. Spain or Italy, I like here. I had other choices, like to go to Spain or to Greece or something –
727. I don't want to – so Riga was my only option. I don't know I don't feel that, the warm places
728. are not so attractive to me. I don't know and I like, I'm quite person and I like when people
729. around me are quiet, but those crazy Spanish people, they are not really – this fiesta all the
730. time is not really for me so and yeah the main thing was to… then I've decided, it is useful
731. for me, for my future and not some exotic towns, but what is actually useful for future.
732. I took the Baltic Sea region course, because it was related to my studies, but there are not so
733. many classes for me, that's why I'm focusing on my Russian at the moment and when I go
734. back to Estonia, I hope that there I can go to that company in Estonia. Because at my work I
735. also have to do some things in Russian - have to translate something and finally I
736. remembered some things. This company, I wanted to work in that company even three
737. years ago, so I'm always pushing myself… yeah it's related to my studies and environment
738. protection thing and to and I'm really glad that I came here and for the opportunity to
739. practice in this company. I'm really really happy. For me it's a really good opportunity and I
740. can't imagine in any other country.

741. Alf.

742. I like Russian language and I wanted to study it. It sounds good, also it's good because I study

743. business. My Russian teacher in Italy told me that Latvia was my best bet as everyone there

744. speaks Russian – and of course it's not like that and it wasn't the best choice for learning

745. Russian to come here. So, you can say I was sent here.

746. I think that people here are really depressed, because they don't like it here, the Latvian

747. people, they don't want to be here, they want to leave Latvia. Of course in Italy people are

748. not so depressed, but because they don't need money like they do here, they are richer but

749. they are ignorant. You always know an Italian, because they have such a strong accent. But

750. people here, maybe they don't talk a lot, they talk much less than Italians, but when they

751. talk they really mean it.

752. Why I moved from the Halls of residence to an apartment is that the conditions were really

753. bad at the halls in Maskavas and some people were up early. A lot of drunks and a lot of

754. violence around – it wasn't safe, I didn't feel safe. Attitude to languages in Italy is that many

755. at least 70 per cent of Italians feel that oh, if this man studies medicine- oh great, he is a

756. hero and if someone studies language – it's just because there is nothing else he can do well,

757. that's why they study languages.

758. I have a lot of friends here, but I also understood that I can live alone and be by myself.

759. There were such moments in my life where I managed to be alone. My Italian friends, those

760. who I thought were my loyal friends, I see them differently now, because of the distance

761. and because I have changed, because I am here, I see who my real friends are…

762. I really like this university it's so small, it's easy to meet people and make friends – unlike at

763. home – where there are so many students and it's more impersonal than here.

764. Expectations with learning Russian and practicing it – I thought I would be fluent after a

765. couple of months, now I see that it's not like that. Because if I'd gone to Spain, for example, I

766. am sure I'd be good at Spanish in two weeks, because not many people speak English there

767. and I know a couple of phrases, but in general Spanish is much closer to my native language

than Russian. Before coming here I thought I'd be fluent. I haven't put enough effort into learning it. I am very busy at work and if I leave home at 8, then I am also back home at 8 in the evening and it's too late to study. And over the weekends I want to do something fun, I want to see my friends and go out. I also feel that I can't express myself in Russian, but I can in English. Because now I am able I have picked up just the basics – I can speak in a shop or ask for directions, but I can't have a proper conversation, because there is soon a moment when I can't say what I want and I have to switch to English. Also, there are so many people here who can switch to English, it's easy for me to express my thoughts in English, so that's what I do. I have been depressed, I had a depression since I have been here, mostly it was because of my Russian. It's so difficult to learn and to be able to speak and understand what others say, and not only the teacher, because she adapts her language, so we can understand but others, like people on the street. My English has become worse too – because it's mixed with my Russian and in my head and makes it worse than before. People's attitude if you speak Russian in a shop and they switch to Latvian, so I can't really always practice my Russian. Culture shock – there was nothing so much that shocked me here – maybe the weather, but I think it's ok, it's manageable, it doesn't bother me. I have a lot of local friends – most of my friends are local. My study is my work, because it's hard, it requires a lot effort and a lot of energy. My typical day and typical weekend is simple. I get up early, get dressed and go to university, I come back late, cook, eat and relax. I usually study in the library. On weekends I invite my friends to come to my house or I go out to parties, clubs or something like that. Yes, I like it here and I would like to stay here longer if I could, but I can't. If I had more time, if I was staying here for a longer time... it would certainly be different, because it's like in the game, when you know how much time you have left and it's ticking off and you see how little time you have left, then you know that you need to hurry up and do more and get it done quickly. I have become more self-confident and sure that I can live on my own and manage on my

own now. Also, I have become stronger, I can solve the problems on my own and get to the
bottom of things without help.

An.

A.: First time when I tried on was on my own, it was such a surprise for me to travel alone,
because when I was 17 yrs old I studied 1 month in Finland and I was there alone by
families. I changed families week to week. So it was good experience and I made it alone.
Most of traveling I did because I was member of sport dancing and we travelled a lot with
families at young age. I was in Germany, Austria, Romania, and I think my last travel was in
Netherlands in Amsterdam. When I was in Finland we made trip by ship to Riga, just 1 day
here and went back to Helsinki by Viking line. Yes I liked it.
I feel myself like good when I'm traveling, it's a present for me even in Europe because I'm
here in Germany in Finland we always have common language and I'm very happy to
communicate with other people in other languages and I can make it only by traveling
because in Hungary I cannot speak in English, I can but it's stupid. Because we have over
90% of population are Hungarian, its not a bilingual state so I don't have chance to exercise
it. OK that's a question I get always because you study German philosophy why you are not
in Germany? Well first I didn't want to make Erasmus experience. No at first I didn't *******
I think first I want to finish my studies in 5 years and it's quite hard work for me because I
study German philology and study European studies so I have 2 subjects and plus **** so I
have much to do……but then 1 girl we have English classes together and she is working in the
international office of university, she said to me everyone get email with the place where
you can apply for Erasmus and I thought ok no no **** I am not interested in it as I would
like to finish my studies and I opened this mail and just because I was curious I checked what
are the possibilities and there was German philology and I have 5 or 4 things to choose from
them – erm **** , Riga, and then I thought ok Riga, it would be quite good because I didn't

821. want to go to Germany. Erm first because it's quite expensive and I thought **** should be
822. more than Germany and I don't speak French, it's in Belgium… They speak Flemish…But you
823. know the official language and I I can't speak and I didn't want to spend a lot of money for
824. Erasmus. Yeah but it's not enough. If you go to Finland, Germany, Spain, French, Great
825. Britain then it's a big investment of the family.Yeah because 400 euro is not enough!
826. In Great Britain it was enough only for accommodation. And you know if in GB u want to buy
827. Coke it's also not like here, so I thought maybe Riga - it could be interesting and the other
828. thing was once there was a scientific competition and I learned some basis about close
829. cooperation between Baltic states and Russia and I thought, ok, this maybe good reason to
830. apply for this and other thing was the Russian language, which I began at my university and I
831. thought at Riga I could continue. Several reasons…..and then I checked everything on home
832. page and looked at what kind of courses are here and how much I should pay for
833. accommodation and I said this should be enough money…..it's enough. Yes 300 Lats per
834. month, 350 Euro is what I get. 40 euros less! Yes but I still have my scholarship from the
835. university back home, according to my average grade for the semester and I have a self-
836. student credit, it's from the state with quite good conditions and after I get a job I have to
837. pay it back.
838. Alone no, but we travel a lot we… You need many things…
839. I think the time I spent here was not enough, erm I remember that it won't be surprise for
840. me because I come from Eastern Europe state, I know homeless people, I know trash on
841. streets, I know what kind of public transport we have and it's the same here, so it wasn't a
842. cultural shock for me. I was afraid a little bit because I knew the place where we live is not in
843. the best place in the city and I thought that ok, I am choosing cheap solution for
844. accommodation so I was afraid what kind of accommodation I would have……but I felt that I
845. am a physically strong person so it won't be a problem.
846. Before coming here I didn't know any Latvians before I came here and I don't know many
847. Latvians now. Only my teachers and somebody who studies same subjects.

848. It’s a big topic amongst Erasmus students, I’m very grateful that I can be here but now that
849. I’m here I think that Hungarian society is happier than this society.
850. Yes, I think people have hard life because they don’t have much money because they suffer
851. a lot and I can see it on their faces. Most people I meet in the shops or on public transport
852. and you know trolleybus 15… Maybe they have a lot of problems but they are answering
853. with foreigner because I think that the normal way to behave. In Hungary, we are laughing a
854. lot and making jokes but here I have to tolerate that they don’t make jokes if I go to a shop
855. or something, if I buy something I have to ask them I give money ****?
856. Social kind of events… The other thing is that my boyfriend came over and he spent 8 nights
857. in hotel and in reception the girls were not very kind with us. After u spend 8 nights in a
858. hotel and you spend more than 400ls there, a thank you or something like that would be
859. good. But the only thing they said to us was “Did you drink something from mini-bar?” “no”
860. “then ok, please go away!”. You pay, you check out, yes, no thank you or be our guest once
861. more, I hope you enjoyed your time in Riga! Hotel “Viktoria” in Chaka iela and I think it’s
862. Russian… Because I hear sometimes that these unfriendly things come not from Latvian
863. people they are Russian, but I don’t know whether it’s right or not – I don’t feel this kind of
864. difference. From other Erasmus students.
865. I think maybe they just heard it from somewhere or it’s a kind of stereotype but I don’t know
866. it… Like me? I’m a foreigner! It’s a good question, yeah because I just remember whether I
867. would like to write a Master’s thesis about foreigners in Latvian society. Majority,
868. minority…Maybe I am not foreigner but I cannot speak the language of these people but
869. during this time I know more about this country, about history of this country, about
870. government, the society than those people who live here.
871. I had politics in Latvia, I learnt, I read a lot of books about it and I don’t think that those
872. people are interested in politics that’s my impression, because I heard it but I think that
873. most people don’t care about politics here in Latvia, because they don’t trust it.
874. No it’s what I heard from the faculty of science from professors, they told it to us. The

875. situation is quite bad in this country - they are not interested in it and I just saw the statistics
876. that some parties just disappeared for 4 years and then came back again so they don't have
877. a very stable position. So, I think people just move from 1 party to another and may be
878. because there are not big differences between them but I don't reason but I think politics is
879. very important because in the country where from I came, from Hungary, our society is
880. divided – the socialist party and right wing party and we are, as you say, we are enemies,
881. really. You know from a person may he be red or orange and we are very…politics is very
882. important. You collect your friends according to whether they are orange or red.
883. Yes, so it's not important here. There are some parties but they are so minor, you don't feel
884. it like you say, it's not so so clearly shown. That we came to from foreigner…
885. Foreigner, I think its not a question of language, for example in here I can order *kafiju ar*
886. *pienu* I know the *pelmeni* or kind of *pankukas* and I can understand what I like to eat and I
887. think I am quite integrated in this society. I mean I don't speak the language, but I eat what
888. they eat, I read what they read.
889. I have to eat what they eat because that's the only thing I can buy here. There are a lot of
890. things that I started to eat since I'm here, for example "pankukas" or I really like soup with
891. red beets in kefirs. It's pink and you can….It's funny color…Yes, I like "solanka" and I really
892. like "pelmeni". So, I think somebody who can 4 times in a week eat pelmini is integrated.
893. Yes, but it's a part of Latvian society but I have never been to Russian. That's the only thing I
894. haven't… Yes, maybe. For example, ok, I read *Baltic Times*, because it's in English, I can't
895. read *Diena* but sometimes I read the *Baltic Times* and I know what happens here, I know
896. Prime Minister resigned.
897. Yes and the Russian elections, something like that. You know if I'm in Hungary, then my
898. point of view is from Hungary, because it's quite good to see in the weather forecast you see
899. the whole Europe from your home country. Here, in Latvia, you see the other part of Europe.
900. So you feel that you have actually moved , your life is here and you look from here to rest of
901. world kind of. Yeah, that's right. We went 2 times to *Astro'n'outs* concert. You don't know

902. Astro'n'outs?! Come on, they are some nominatives for music television, European music
903. awards, yes you could vote for them! Yes they are Latvians. I think in September there was
904. an evening, you know the part where the Freedom monument, there is a hill and on this hill
905. there was a … maybe it was the day of Baltic unity or something like that because Latvians
906. and Lithuanians were in traditional dresses and they were singing and we were drinking. And
907. what else, once I was in Goethe institute because there was an evening with a Russian writer
908. who lives in Germany and writes in German, he was here. I wanted to see the Nutcracker in
909. the Opera house but in this weekend they show it last time before Christmas, which I can't
910. understand because it's Christmas already and this weekend we go with Erasmus network
911. somewhere I don't know, so I cannot go there. Yes but only with students, because I'm the
912. only 1 who studies German philology among Erasmus students but there is somebody, they
913. are Germans and study German philology here, but I think it's not the same, your mother
914. tongue and the foreign language. In foreign language you may have a barrier and…
915. Yes.Yes, I have classes in which I'm the only 1 Erasmus student. Others are local indeed.
916. It depends on the people who I know because first time I was in my German class, 1 of my
917. German classes I recognized they were ***** so it's first year for them, they were very nice
918. with me, they were very open and they talked to me a lot in German, which is quite good
919. for them they are in first year first semester but I have another class which is for Master's
920. and they never talk to me and they're alone and I have very good relationship with teacher
921. and I speak a lot because I'm really interested in the subject and the others just …
922. Yes and they don't speak to me. They are all girls and I feel the girls are quite closed because
923. I have good contact with boys from my class I don't know if it means something or no but it's
924. a rule. No because we go there and read a lot of stuff with each other and then we leave.
925. During the class I always sit alone but it's comfortable for me and I don't want to say them
926. anything you know they already know, they make their masters and they are working be

927. fore classes they are tired. Hmm, I have a lot of friends, and most of them are from this class
928. I have great friends who are native Latvian and they are boys and they are freshmen and we
929. always speak in German. For example my, how do you say, my mobile phone was stolen on
930. trolley bus and 1 guy came with me to the *lombards* to find new one but we didn't find it but
931. then I get new mobile phone from him just to use it while I'm here.
932. My roommate, B., because I always say she's a fan of Latvia, she can speak Latvian and
933. everything I know about Latvia I know it from her. Without her I would never go to
934. Astro'n'out concert, I would not go to singing party on the hill. I think it's very good I have
935. her because she knows a lot of things, she has friends and I was introduced to these friends
936. because we met somewhere in Sigulda or somewhere. I had my tourist guides in Hungarian
937. that I brought with me from Hungary and I read them but it's better to read it now when I
938. see, from home it's no sense
939. Yes, I think I had, first sadness of the society but nothing else. Ok, the shock comes now
940. because this exam system is quite another *** for me still but I think nothing else. Every
941. teacher was very nice to me when I thought I am here let's do something with me because I
942. have to get a mark but I think it depends on both sides, they were nice because I was
943. interested in it and they see that I'm quite open and a nice person and we can now work
944. together. In first time I didn't recognize that I'm not home, so I just…… I didn't know when I
945. am. I just arrived and I said ok you will be here for 6 months and it's a very big shock for you
946. that's why I could not do something with it. After 3 days I recognized that, ok, I'm in Latvia, I
947. make my Erasmus scholarship and it's not home, I didn't have problems with language and I
948. had my buddy, you know buddy? Someone to help you and she was very nice, yes. Then I
949. began to know all the Erasmus students and we helped each other a lot.
950. I think after 2 weeks when I find all my classes all of my subject and I was ok, so now we can
951. begin, yes! It's not a great time to ask it because with one leg I'm already at home. It's
952. Christmas and I still have two weeks, so I think I'm a resident hmm. But one month before I
953. could be near citizen.

That's the first experience that you have in Erasmus experience is that you have to fill in the application forms – that's the very hard, that's the first step. If you manage that, you can go over. So I managed it, but most important is that I'm here alone and that I have to take care about me and I think it's very good, because, for example I'm at the university that's in my town, I've a relationship for 4 years and we were together at the university. We're not studying together anymore, he's already got a degree and he's working, but he has to be at home alone. I have to manage everything by myself, administration, which I really hate. Here I have to take care of myself, I have to go to Rimi, I have to go to the faculty, I have to go and register, I have to go to the embassy and so on. I have to do it on my own. And other experience, which I thought was very good also – I cannot speak Hungarian. Of course, I have a dictionary with me, but only at my laptop. I don't have a dictionary with me, a hard copy. What kind I have to take with me? German? English? Hungarian? Russian? Latvian? No, I've left everything at home. I only have it at my computer. And I'm just pushed to say what I'd like to say and nobody can help me and nobody can understand if I say something in Hungarian, but sometimes they can understand only a few words that I say in Hungarian. Usually there is a shock or surprise or something … but when it's my first reaction than of course it's in Hungarian, sometimes if I would like to question like "what" or "where" it's sometimes it comes in Hungarian, but nobody recognize it because it's so fast and… but I think it's very good, because I see… independence wise… Yes, I hope that I've changed, because at home I was quite a pessimistic person. Yes. Because I've always heard from my professors that my German language skills are not good enough, I have a lot of grammatical mistakes and now I'm here and everybody is satisfied with me. And it's good and I hope I've enough power to write my thesis and get my MA. I'm still a Hungarian, still 100%. At first, I thought, that maybe the life is better here, I like the bread that I can buy here, I like that there are so many salads that are made from fish here, but now I think, it's good for one or two months, but sometimes I'm just dreaming

of eating what my mother cooks or something like that. Yes, and I cannot deny my identity!
Maybe I can be an expert on Latvia, or something like that, but sometimes it's very good if
you're talking with others and they say: "You know, it's important in this case in Germany"
and I can say: "And in Hungary it's this…" And yes, I'm proud of my country since I'm here,
because we are a very pessimistic nation, in the case we always say that we have a big
country, we have huge democracy, nothing is going on here, nothing is operating in a good
way here and we've the worst highways, we've the worst public transport system,
everything and here I recognized that maybe Hungary is a working country, because there
are a lot of things in the shops, which are from Hungary and it's very good and I sometimes
buy them and it's good to see that it's made in Hungary, because I think there are not a lot
of things in Hungary, which are made in Latvia. For example, our PM was here, there was an
opening ceremony of the embassy here. No, because I didn't know that he was here, but my
mother called me and said: " I was watching the news and I didn't see you there next to the
PM" – that's because I wasn't there. But than I know, e.g. that *** are from Hungary,
because the PM made this negotiation while he was here.**** This is the thing which I can
be proud of, because, you know, for a German it doesn't mean anything, because you can
buy *Haribo* anywhere, so what? We only have 10 mil. people.
Of course. Both of my languages, German and English… German because I thought that
there will be a lot of Germans here and I was right, and most of the Germans I speak in
German to me and they always correct me and it helps me a lot. So, for example, in the
room they speak in German and with the other Germans and during the class, but with
other people I always speak English. So, it's a parallel, I hope that I've improved. When I go
home, I'll have to write something for the national homepage of Erasmus, because
everybody has to write about the experience, because if somebody likes to go, so I'll write
that it's the right place to improve not only German but also English language, because I

1005. think if I go to Germany, ok, I have always Germans around me, but nobody more. So, and I
1006. have and I think the Uof L they have so many classes which I'm interested in and which are
1007. in English and I've to write papers in English, I've to read in English and it's very good.
1008. In the dormitory, if I want to say something to the comandante, which for us it's a
1009. "babuwka", because we call them that and I had to speak to them in Russian and all my best
1010. experience was in "Narvessen", where you cannot go inside and there is just a lady and I ask
1011. her to give me a map of Riga in Russian and she understand me and it feels great.

1012. No, and I have a very good reason. First, it would be too much to begin a new language. And
1013. everybody sais me that Latvian is not quite an easy language. And the teacher from Latvian
1014. she told me that if you study Russian and Latvian, it would be too much. Among many
1015. reasons is also that I cannot continue it at home. If I say that 20 people in Hungary know
1016. something of Latvian, I think it's too much in Hungary. Because I cannot find a teacher to
1017. continue with it. Of course! I want to and maybe one day I'll be an ambassador of Hungary
1018. here, in Latvia , who knows? Then I'll learn Latvian.
1019. Twice a week? It's in English. It's only for Erasmus students.
1020. Yes, yes, but I joined the beginners group, because in Hungary I only learned grammatic and
1021. I thought that I need to speak, I need to hear and it's very good that I've a teacher whose
1022. mother language, whose mother tongue is Russian. She speaks a lot and she has to translate
1023. a lot, pronouncing things, so we have enough to express ourselves. And I think it's crucial in
1024. case of Russian, when I see a lot of written things on the street and I try to read it, which is
1025. very hard, of course. To speak Russian? If I would be able to speak fluently in one month's
1026. time. Only "spasibo" and "pozaluysta" .No! most of the problems I have with "babuwka" in
1027. dormitory, because, you know, it's kind of the problem – ok, I'm here, I'm a foreigner, I'm a
1028. student but I cannot understand what they are speaking and I don't think it's a literary
1029. Russian that they speak. It's very hard to understand, it's so far away from my mother

tongue and I'm just happy to understand something what's written and not to understand
them. They cannot accept that we cannot understand them. Just speaking, just speaking and
speaking. Of course they know and they don't speak another language, and I can understand
it, but I think it's better if we try to communicate with each other.
just the "babuwkas" - other are fine! Oh, and the conductors on the bus. Because than they
would like to say something to me but I cannot explain what my problem. Like yesterday, I
was on the way she was moving quite fast and she said something quite fast and I didn't
understand it, but I think I was in her way and she just asked me to just move there… It was
funny, (laughs) once on the bus one woman was trying to give me 30 santims, because I
have this bag and it was like that and she thought that I was a conductor, but I didn't take
her money and showed her my ticket. It was really funny!
A lot. You know, we have a lot of people from a lot of nationalities, from different countries.
For example, my best friends are from Germany, from Poland, from Slovenia and from
Portugal. And I'm Hungarian. If you put it on the map, I think it's almost the whole Europe.
And we speak a lot about own countries, we are listening to Polish music, to Hungarian
music, to Portuguese music and I think it's a good thing, because we can show a lot of things
to each other. For example, it was very good, in my department, in European studies
department, it's quite specialized on Mediterranean things and Latin America and Spanish
and Portuguese culture, so I learned a lot of it but I am more interested in the Northern
Europe. But now that I know this Portuguese person and we talk a lot about Portugal. I'm in
the mood, ok, so maybe I'd like to learn more about Portugal and I have to continue to err
these studies and I have more empathy and, more tolerance towards my leader of the
department, because he is a fan of Portugal and Spanish culture. So now I know Portuguese
people and I like him very much. Now when I have to study something about the Portuguese
culture, I'll think about him. Yes, I've told you that I think we are healthy and happy society
now that I'm here. My family, I still feel the same about them, about my boyfriend, I still feel

1056. the same, I love my brothers… err but at the university at home I don't have good really
1057. good friends, because I had other expectations towards the university, and I felt that it is a
1058. really good place, I can study, I can do what I like to do and I have a lot of people with whom
1059. I can speak about all the stuff I'm interested in, but now, because at my university it's quite a
1060. small university and it's not in the capital of Hungary there are a lot of people who don't live
1061. close to the city and it was the only choice to come here and they are not motivated, they
1062. don't know a lot of things about the world. I'm quite a cultural person, I like music, I like film,
1063. I like books, I like err art and I hate when I cannot speak about this with the people,
1064. because they are not interested in it, because… and I think the university you have to be
1065. quite a cultural person to get into the university – it's not that easy in Hungary. You can be
1066. very good in Math, you can be very good in physics, you can be very good in, for example
1067. German grammar, but only grammar, not about the German culture and people. Only these
1068. things matter, nobody asks you whether or not … what's your opinion about others, what's
1069. going on in the world, the climate change, globalization, something like that and I hear
1070. somebody don't have enough time to read newspapers, to watch something in the Internet.
1071. They just just live somewhere but they don't know where they are , what's happening… I
1072. don't have any common things with them, because the only thing I have in common with
1073. them – I have to finish my studies. Ok, sometimes I don't go to the classes, because I saw a
1074. good movie yesterday and I went to sleep very late and I don't want to wake up. But they
1075. know that they have the only target and that target is the degree. But here I know a lot of
1076. people who are very open-minded, who read a lot, who know a lot of things and THAT's the
1077. community I was waiting for three – four years at the university and now I get it… so…
1078. Yeah, and I'm afraid of what will be when I go home and just same sad and bitter persons.
1079. Oh, but it's only one class, but at home it's for the whole year.
1080. Yes, and most important that I don't have many lectures only two days per week and the

rest of my time I want to spend in Budapest. While I was here my boyfriend bought a flat in Budapest and it's a big capital and I like it very much, so … nice I hope I'll be a citizen of Budapest when I go home, because really … my friends called me just before I came here. Now I spent a whole summer in Budapest when I had my internship in the Agricultural Ministry after that I came over here and now to go back to my very small university, in a very small city – it would be to die for me! Yes, my attitude towards the persons at my university has changed extremely! Hmm (laughs) I thought about amazing or crazy that's the true word. If I had to choose one it would still be amazing.

Ard:

I've been constantly since January, but I have been back and forth for two years, so it's not my first time here. I'm not an average Erasmus student, who comes for the first time and sees it. Yes, I have, well Estonia – Latvia that's so close. Riga is closer to Tartu than Tallinn. And my research subject is regional history, so it's only obvious to come here and see what's going on here, what the Latvians are doing and to compare with what they are doing in Tartu. I live in an apartment. I rent a flat. My daily life – it differs. Well, I personally have two aims – to do research and to pass the exams, courses so that's if there are lectures, most of my daily life evolves around lectures, so if there is a lecture, I go to a lecture, I prepare to the lecture, I come back from the lecture, so I go to sleep thinking of lecture. If there isn't any lecture, I go to the library, go to an archive or stay at home to read and write – these are the main things. Of course there are some meetings with friends, from prior to the Erasmus time and also a couple of Erasmus students who I met at a language course and that's mainly it. Weekends, I try to use weekends as much as possible to get out of Riga. Until now I've mostly been back in Estonia, because I have still lots of things to do there, but also some other cities with one of the Erasmus students, we rented a car and went around in a car. But if there are no plans my days are the same as the average day and I do some work on my

research. I am writing master thesis. I need to finish it by summer. So instead of writing it in
Tartu, I've decided to make the last semester just to go to Riga and to write it here, totally
different to my home town. Why? Because I haven't been outside of Tartu studying for
longer period of time and the last semester sort of is the best, so instead of staying in Tartu
city and writing, I've decided to do something interesting. I also decided that I could write
the Latvian part of the research, everything that comes from Latvia, I will write it here,
that's why I picked Riga – not Helsinki or Paris.
Yes, it is totally different, even so two cultures that are very close, I still had a culture shock.
Yeah, the difference in language and it's hard to orientate as good as at home. Feeling this
that you don't understand what's really going in and you have to think every step through
several times. Even the everyday means, like where to wash your close, where, how to open
your bank account. What to say to when you buy food or something special, how to say
certain things. At home you just go and ask and here you have to… and it creates this kind of
feeling of helplessness a little bit. But the more you study the language, the easier it gets.
It's a totally different experience, it's different. First you start seeing… the things that seem
to you very obvious, the world with much more colour. It's a process, first you come, you
start, you don't think about it and you get a bit annoyed if you can't find the things the same
as that you usually do and then you open up your mind, than you do the things differently
and then you realise that it also works and then you compare that what is which way is
better, which way is not and if it matter at all. It gives you an insight into different
communities and different nations how they do things. And it makes you think that if you
have the same aim you can reach it in two different ways. The other thing is that being here
gives a better understanding of yourself, you can see how you react in different this kind of
situations. You are alone, totally different place, how you manage. Are you able to survive
normally or what's going on. Of course you are not doing it every time, but at some point
you start thinking: what have I been doing here? Should I act differently?

It's… same thoughts that you are… when you communicate with different cultures and you understand them. And comparing staff and how my friends in Estonia how they react if some subjects, how they react differently and already you can see some difference between their behaviour and how they…because they haven't been outside. After three months you can see the differences. It's on daily basis it's gives you such European village – there is a phrase "global village" and in it you meet Erasmus students in your lectures and it gives you a kind of feeling that you are not, except lecturers, of course, who are locals, in the lecture, you see everyone is from a different country and everybody is speaking the same language, English, it gives you a very European feeling - "European village". It's like the saying – what I haven't seen doesn't exist. If you have never been to Brazilia – how can you know that it exists. If you see Czechs and Spanish and Italians and Portuguese and so on – you are the same colour, we are all in the small room country but we are living in a much bigger way. And I think that's one of the main goals of Erasmus, to integrate the students. It's definitely successful. I think...This is the thing that's the weak point of Erasmus

– the connection between the local community and the Erasmus community. What I heard from Erasmus students in Tartu and what I hear here it's almost the same, so I think it's almost the same in almost every country. First of all, the main things is it's difficult to find a connection on daily basis with Latvians. You are going in the same building, you are going to the same university, but you are just passing by – there is no point of connection. It makes it very hard…For example, one Czech student who was in Tartu university as Erasmus, he said that living in the dormitory, he learned more Spanish and Italian than Estonian language. That's what the aim of Erasmus is, to teach us as many cultures, as many languages as possible. Why this happens, because the universities usually put foreign students in the same dormitories, on the same floor and... I don't know, maybe for security reasons they don't have contact at all I don't know and so, Erasmus students are all living together, same,

on the same floor, they don’t have the possibility to see what’s going on the other floor or downstairs and so, the local and Erasmus... in theory, yes... but if you have already plenty of foreign students from different countries, it is very hard to think of something, to go to an average Latvian and start talking to him or her. Because they already feel comfortable and maybe they feel... stop thinking of making friends, because you already have all this... the maximum number of friends that you can have in another country. For example, one Erasmus student here, he moved out last week just to live in one apartment with the Latvians. The main motivation was that he wanted to practice the language and understand more of the everyday student life, not this Erasmus student life. Yeah, out of eight students who started with me this semester, all of them wanted to get out, so two of them were already out then I moved out, and two students moved out after two weeks and now moved out other students. Two students wanted to move out but it was so hard to find an apartment, so they gave up and stayed. All of them at some point so... moved out. But there are different reasons, not only all of them had the same reasons for moving out, but one of them was the location that it was so far away and... It was the first thing that the teachers said to us that it’s a dangerous... there are pluses and minuses of living by yourself. But if my main aim would have been to have fun and enjoy Erasmus life, then I would have definitely stayed at the dormitory, but my aim was to research and to study and to make some kind of connection with the Latvian university for the future and that’s why I chose to live by myself not to get distracted. You can’t fully concentrate on your work then. I would call it a culture shock, it’s several reactions and feelings, it’s like just evaluating, devaluating, disappointing of course that some things are not like you expected, then understand it and then settling and getting used to it. For me one example is that this bureaucracy that... it’s this... lots of bureaucracy – this residence permit – at the bank they always ask, this kind of thing. It should be, it would be much easier to get all these things

done in the first week with the help of the local person, who would say that it should be
done like this or like this. It might happen that even finding a place for registration –
somewhere in Mezaparks, in Ciekukalns for European Citizens only, because I went first
there and it was so much trouble. Probably it's the same in Estonia, I'm not sure. But in
Estonia I'm used to doing everything through the computer, so there is it's very easy. You
just put in
your ID card and everything is electronic. Here I have to go through all these processes and
papers. It's so difficult, but probably it's the same in Estonia for the foreigners. So, first it
makes you a little bit annoyed, as you don't understand why and at one point you are just
like: *Ehhh... I don't need it, I just want to leave, nobody cares anyway*! But then you still
think, that you should do it, it's ok, you should just do it and you do it and when you go
through this process, you understand that it's not so bad. It should be easy and you learn
that you have got to fit...
I thought that it's a life that I can make myself... it's gonna be very ...it's a big capital of the
Baltics, it's a lot of culture here. And I love to go to cinemas, theatres, to see the culture life
from inside – not only opera or the travel theatre. Just like at home, it's just as difficult to get
involved fast and share it and here it's also the language barrier – you have to pick
something that you understand. No, it's more or less like, getting ... for me a lot of life in
Estonia work etc., half of the time I had to work for Estonian archives – so it turned out as
well as I've imagined it. It's the same life, combined with research and studies about Latvians
– it's not overall – it's professional.
It's I went through an intensive course and a B1 level course... and B2 and then C level – this
is advanced. I think I have improved it. Because what we learned at the intensive course I
already knew it. Yes, I think I've improved it and right now I am improving and it's a B1 level
and I am improving a lot.
Here? Most important people are Erasmus... other... friends I made in Erasmus course,
which is very obvious, that I became good friends with one German student, which is

obvious, because of cultural similarities, because if Italians and others are always late, then we are already sitting and always on time and doing other typical staff. And so we understood things similarly and so we became good friends and this... then I would like... in my subject, history, other students in the same subject and the lecturers in the same subject... that's the main point for me here, to see how the teaching is going on here and what are the students here like here and to make some connections here, but it's not so important right now, because I found it very difficult to break through this barrier between the foreigner and the locals in the history department. I already got in contact with some lecturers who gave me literature about this, who are teaching these subject, but as I am a foreigner, the literature is in Russian or in English, but the courses are in Latvian so... For me, as everything is in Latvian and I am a foreigner, at some time I feel that the attitude is that it's pointless to involve me at all because I probably don't understand anything at all so they push me aside but when I try to reach through this history department and see more what's going on, then they are like: you are and we have to deal with you, ok, let's see what we can do. But that... because of that academical life here, nothing is true here, you can feel it. I should ... but I think it differs between the faculties, it differs, it differs with different people. I have this attitude and it of course evolved through the staff of course, and I miss this connection that every Erasmus student needs. You have to see what you can do and then you can go on. You need some points, and we don't have any lectures in English, then we'll see what we can do and arrange for you to be as a home student, as one-to-one and they can give you books but that's not exactly what it is. But then again you are not in lectures and the most interesting part of the studies is meeting together in groups and having discussions and so on, and you can read the books at home by yourself and you don't have to come to lectures. Now I am looking for other Latvian other students but I haven't found them yet, but I'm looking for them. But I don't know any Latvian history students either, but

I know other students, so I try to reach the Latvians, because maybe there is a somebody
who knows somebody who knows somebody.
Latvian friends are mostly through student organisations, if you check promotions and so on.
If you are a little bit active in your own university, then you'll connect with some other. So, I
already had some friends from previous time, from Jelgava and from Riga also, mainly I go
out with them and Erasmus students, these two. But they are... it's not completely to do
with the Erasmus programme. With Erasmus students it was mainly this intensive course.
Since then we've known each other.
I think they are not the same, I think that, I believe this theory, that your behaviour a little
bit of your behaviour depends on what language you speak, how you... express yourself
through the language. In English you choose different words, different ways of expressing
yourself, so you are a different kind of person to others and you also have different views.
Because You act. You are acting this reflexive... so at home, I am speaking my native
language, so I am acting completely different than here. And here I speak English, so I am
also acting differently, even so... also the feeling of different environment, how secure...
here, for example, you have to be more... more alert, in general, to look around, to see
which trolleybus you need to change and something like this, at home you don't have to
worry so much, because you are used to these kind of things. For example, in the evening
with friends, you have to think you are going, how to get home and so on. But different
behaviour comes from which language you use. It's... you start thinking English, you behave
like English, you start speaking Latvian, you start thinking Latvian, you start speaking
Estonian, you start thinking Estonian, so you construct different thoughts, because the
words and expressions are different, so... I feel much more comfortable learning Latvian and
speaking Latvian, than in English, because the expressions are similar to Estonian, it's almost
the same. So, I feel that it doesn't take so much energy from me to think in, to talk in it, as
much as I know it, of course, I am not able to talk fluently, of course, but I feel already that it

is easier. In English, I feel also, that I am different also, I don't feel like an Estonian, like an Estonian, it makes you more a cosmopolite. You are thinking, when you talk in English, and English is your main language, than immediately you start looking for signs in English, the information in English, everything in English. You block out all the other languages and so you immediately don't feel like an occupant here, you feel like a foreigner, you don't feel like so much a local person. If you are in Estonia and you speak in English, you feel a little bit like a foreigner – it's a weird thing how the mind works... My idea is to speak Latvian fluently, to feel like a Latvian. No, I think it's possible, but my stay is too short and there are too many other aims, so I can't achieve this. And it wasn't my aim for the stay. That is some kind of... friends who stay behind, they are not part of my life right now anymore and if I go back to my home country, than it's the life here is a foreign life, it's not part of me anymore. It's like jumping from one life to another and there isn't connection between them and ...they think positive of this, of me being here and being exchange student and they are always very interested how the life is here, what's going on. Yes, I feel that I have gained a lot from here, from this experience. I've become more tolerant and more experienced in communicating with different cultures and well this feeling would be different for others, for other the students from countries that are more multicultural, because Estonia is like Latvia, it's very unicultural, well there are two main cultures, but here, especially the Erasmus programme gives you, totally this multicultucific - you have all the races, all the ages, not the age that you have thirty year old, twenty year old students – different age groups and of course every student is from a different country, and that gives you a totally other perspective on them and makes you more comfortable in the world.

Br.

I've lived in Latvia before (laughs) for 8 months and I've travelled to the neighbouring countries like Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain and to England.

1284. Yeah! I had a voluntary service - a European voluntary service and I worked for the
1285. organisation that works with disabled people “Operants”, in Riga and yeah… I was there and
1286. helped something in the office with them and yeah I used to live in Riga.
1287. No, I’ve travelled with my friends and my family but I’ve also travelled on my own, so I’m
1288. used to being on my own. Yeah and the other trips were more touristy, like leisure trips to
1289. the beach… because I’ve been here before and I really wanted to come back and when I had
1290. been here for the first time, I’ve decided to start Baltic philology and so it made sense to
1291. come here and improve my Latvian. My Latvian was quite ok when I was here – I’ve learned
1292. it before I came here and managed to speak – not as good as I wanted to and therefore I
1293. thought that it would be good to be here again… and I really like Riga and Latvia.
1294. there was this possibility we were given so I couldn’t really choose and I knew that they had
1295. Baltic philology.
1296. laughs)
1297. I think yes, just not so much anymore. Maybe I learned more about the mentality, I don’t
1298. know, like, for example… not caring so much about standing in line, for example. When they
1299. wouldn’t stand in line in Germany, they would complain and here they don’t complain, just
1300. do it (laughs). Depend on how you feel. You have to wait longer but it you don’t mind, at
1301. least it seems like you don’t mind. I don’t know… there are more things… but I hope you
1302. don’t mind. Foreigner? Generally. It’s someone who is not completely integrated into the
1303. society of the country. Yes, I’m still a foreigner here, because I’m not 100% Latvian… I’m not
1304. as much foreign as other people, maybe, because I can communicate and I’ve had more
1305. experience about the whole thing and I know some people here… I’m going to celebrate
1306. Christmas here and things like this… I’ve got some experience…
1307. Yeah, because I though 4-5 months is not long enough for me, I want to stay longer!
1308. Yeah, Yeah we do.Yeah, I do, I share a room with a girl from Hungary. Yeah, I thought that I
1309. was really lucky at the beginning when I found out that my two friends who came over with
1310. me have German roommates and I was so lucky that my roommate was from another

country but then I found out that she was studying German philology and speaks fluent
German. Almost the same but it's interesting, it's more than ***** especially from
Germany… because 30% of Erasmus students are German and so… it's quite a lot and you
don't feel so much that you are abroad sometimes. Exactly! Yeah.
I really wanted to improve my Latvian in a way that I could speak freely and fluently, I
wanted to improve my Russian, because I had only studied it only for one year and I thought
that I had a better opportunity here, because there are Russians here and therefore I could
improve my everyday use of Russian as well… so and then I was looking forward to speaking
English again, of course, because when I live in Germany, I speak German all the time and
when I lived here before I had friends with whom I could speak English all the time and it's
quite nice, I like it! yeah, I have a Latvian and a Russian course. I had English in Germany, but
I don't have it anymore here – nothing about grammar! (laughs).
You saw our group in the Latvian class. We are a group of about 10 people. We all have quite
a high level of Latvian already, so we can at least talk more or less. In the lectures we
usually read a text at home and in the lectures we talk about the text or talk about some
pictures, I don't know or we describe something, or ….so that we pick out something to talk
about, something like – the last movie we have seen or also… and some grammar at the
end, very little and very seldom… I think the teacher doesn't like it so much either. And the
Russian course is a bit more scholar. We mainly read some texts and answer some questions
and or… do some exercises with some dates and we watch some movies, which I really like.
We've watched two Russian movies. One had English subtitles, so I was quite lucky and the
other one I had two friends who were watching it with me and they could translate
something that I couldn't understand and so I got the intention of the movie. (laughs) and
then we talked about the movie with the whole class. Maybe now I notice more that people
are not so friendly as in Germany, as in shops, for instance, no one stands in the queue but
no one seems to mind that. In Germany people would get angry and say something. Here no

one says anything! People here seem to be very busy – they have no time to meet. All the
time they work and study or do something else. It's someone not fully integrated into the
local society. I've been to see this Austrian-German film "midsummer madness". I was really
excited because I have never seen a Latvian film in a cinema. It was interesting to see the
perceptions of other people of what Latvians are like. I've got a lot of friends who are Latvian
– I met them during my first stay here . It's a pity I don't get to meet them a lot. They are
very busy. I am busy too with work and studying. Also I live very far away from them and far
from the city centre. With other Erasmus students, as we study and live together it's easier. I
think I've made some great friends with some of the Erasmus exchange students and I do
hope to keep in touch with them after we leave Latvia… but who knows, of course…
Sure. This time I was already familiar with how buses work and I speak some Latvian and
Russian and I know my way around the city – it helps a lot to feel more comfortable here. I
think that's why I'm in a better position than many other students. Back home, I come from
a small town, when I came here for the first time it was hard – I didn't know anybody, I lived
far away from the centre – My social life was non-existent. Now it's totally different. I have
many friends who are in the same boat with me.
Overall, I think the level, the requirements here are much lower than in Germany. For
example in one of my classes we had to do a presentation. For me the presentations should
not be read from the beginning till the end – they should be spoken, right? I was amazed
when half way through one of the presentations the teacher interrupted one girl, and the
girl lost the line where she was reading. So, what do you think? The teacher apologized to
her in front of everybody! I was really surprised – this wouldn't be allowed in Germany, at
least not at my university. What's the point of such presentation? Definitely the second time
that I came to Latvia! Now I felt that I knew stuff, I knew people, I like Riga, I feel at home
here. I feel almost like a citizen! Definitely! I've learned to cope with stuff on my own. I've

become more self-assured, self-sufficient, independent. I've improved my Russian so much that this time I could speak to my Latvian-Russian friends. I can say almost everything I want but 2 years ago I couldn't! Since I've arrived, I've been on advanced Russian and advanced Latvian course. Now I feel more German than before. I felt that I represent being German for other Erasmus students from other countries, but at the same time I learned that nationality doesn't matter. Last time I met some Greek and Portuguese people, this time I've got Hungarian and French friends. We can talk to each other, we have fun together, we understand each other. That's more important than nationality – we are cosmopolitan!

Chi.

It's easy to answer. Because the academic thing I can't say anything…

My life… so I am always studying Latvian language and Russian language all the time. I like Latvian language, because… Russian is hard… I liked Latvian language, but this semester even more. I don't know why, but I can speak little by little – so I am very happy, and the teacher encouraged me to speak Latvian, so I try to speak it all the time, for example at the market or some phrases… yes, I write in my notebook it's really useful. I am very busy with learning vocabulary. This semester I only have four classes: Latvian, Russian, Baltic music and management class. Yes, so it's very different, but I only want to concentrate on the languages: Latvian and Russian. To be honest I don't have any interest in Baltic music or management. Just I want to speak these languages and learn them just for myself, out of my own curiosity, because in Japan no one speak Latvian and so… So, recently, I sometimes join the Japanese class, I sometimes join and we together with them. And here there is one native Japanese teacher and get on very well with him. I am the only Japanese at this university, doing the exchange. In Latvia there are only maybe twenty Japanese… so few and out of twenty most of them are the embassy workers – so most people I know – only a small community. I meet them sometimes. Some times at the embassy gives us invitation to a

party or a movie festival, so I join and enjoy. I live at the dorm, in Reznas iela… sometimes I
like it, sometimes I don't like it… there are very many exchange students on the first floor
and it's very fun, but the problem is that there are so many Russian students and they
always make so much noise and I always try to stop it and always try to say to them, but
they just keep the noise up and it's annoying. Recently I gave up to stop and I went to the
reception to complain and the reception lady told him to keep it down, so that night, on
Skype, he sent me this mark with a threat – so I can't understand… they are very selfish. I
like the Russian people, but the Russian people who live in my dorm I can't stand – they are
terrible. My normal weekend is in my room and I am watching YouTube – I try to watch
Japanese comedy - I very much miss the Japanese TV shows. I don't miss Japan, but I really
like Japanese comedies and I miss them so much. I often go to travel. I travel a lot. Last
week, no two weeks ago – I went to Lithuania and a lot of places there by myself, I like to
travel by myself… in Latvia it's good location to go many places and it's so cheap to go to
Sweden and Finland. All the Baltic countries I have already visited, because when I go back
it's so far for me to travel, so now I have to go to as many places as possible. I am here for
one year, but… it's gone so fast – it's shocking – I want to stay here more.
From Japan, it's quite different, of course. So, Latvia's good point is its location and people
are so kind, as I said before, because when I was still in Japan, I thought that Latvian people
are so cold and they don't try to open up their mind. Before coming here I met just one
Latvian student, who was on an exchange at our university, but now she came back here.
She was there… on an exchange… It's very special for me to be here – nobody from home
come here, so for me it's really nice and I love it here.
No, my life here is quite different than in Japan. Because when I was at home I always had a
part time job, because I wanted to get money to go abroad and then I studied of course too,
so I always like work work work with studying of course. So when I stayed in Japan it was
really hard for me but it was nice for me, because I like to work. But after I came here I was

really happy because I didn't have to work, but I got a little bit bored because I didn't have to
work. You know, I like to travel, so I just spend my money…
I don't know how to say – I think I a lot of free time is good but not… now it's ok, though.
Exchange student is just an exchange – this is my image. But in my opinion, exchange
student means that… because I get a big scholarship from my university, I have to study
really hard here, this is my aim and first of all – I am the first Japanese exchange student to
come to this university, so I have to make leave a good impression here and also I have to
report when I go back. For Christmas I didn't go back – I just travelled…
Sometimes I don't like it here, as I've already told you because in my dorm, there is this
crazy Russian guy… the things that I was really said that most people in Latvia speak Russian
– it was a real shock for me - like: why don't Latvian people speak Latvian? So it was my
question, but now I know because of the historical background.
Before coming here, I had no idea what it would be like in Latvia – it was just nothing… sorry,
nothing … I never checked about Latvia before coming here. I just wanted to come here
without knowledge about Latvia and see for myself. Just my image was that it's really cold
here and nobody knows this country, but now I am really happy to be here.
I have been learning Latvian and Russian for nearly two semesters now. My Latvian is really
bad, but if I compare it to the last semester, my Latvian skill a little bit developed, because
when I go to a shop, for example, then I can organize something, I can speak Latvian and
discuss something. Sp when I do that, I really feel how much I have progressed.
Around my friends… there are a lot of foreigners – Russian, German, but they are so nice…
exchange students are so kind. But most of my friends are Latvian. Because in the Japanese
course that I join there are many Latvian students. But my courses that I took are mostly for
exchange students, so most of my group mates are other exchange students.
At first, when I went to the Japanese movie festival, one Latvian girl came up to me and she
asked me in Japanese: Are you Japanese? And I said: Ye, I am Japanese! And I got a lot of
friends from that connection – it's like a web… yes, and I joined the Japanese class. With
exchange students… I am very optimistic and open – so I am always open to others – so it

1439. was easy for me to make friends with Erasmus.
1440. Latvian friends… my Latvian friends image is that they speak Japanese… they are a little bit
1441. shy, because when I talk to them, they always smile and when I speak Latvian or Russian to
1442. them they are always so happy… yes, of course we speak Japanese together, because they
1443. want to practice their Japanese. But I want to practice my Latvian or Russian – it's a little
1444. problem. I don't meet anyone… I don't meet with friends much outside the university. Most
1445. of the time, I meet the Japanese teacher in this building, but I like to spend my time… so free
1446. days I often stay by myself or travel alone.
1447. No, it's quite different, I usually speak Japanese at the university, because at the dormitory,
1448. there are always big groups of other nationalities, like Polish or Italians and I am always
1449. alone, of course they try to speak with their native language, but it's ok… and of course the
1450. habits are always different. I think, European students are lazy, at least I think so… of course
1451. it differs… and of course in Japan it also differs, but I always keep the time and try to submit
1452. the assignments in time, but the European exchange students always come in late and don't
1453. hand in their homework or something, so when I see this, I am always like: that's not good,
1454. eh!? On the e-mail and Skype I almost always keep in touch, especially with my Latvian
1455. friends, even though I go to Japan. Even now I keep in touch with my Korean friends who
1456. were here in the last semester. I don't feel anything - so the only thing is when I have to
1457. introduce myself I always have to say my major, but my major in Japan is English and I don't
1458. want to say that, because my English is terrible – so that's a bad point.
1459. I don't meet exchange students very often, because they always try to hang out together or
1460. go to a club or a party, but I don't like going out so much, so I always refuse. Yes, it's very
1461. easy, because most of the exchange students have Facebook or Skype, so we can always
1462. send each other a message on Facebook or Skype. It's ok, I have no problem. My dorm
1463. reception lady is not so kind with others, but they are always friendly with me, because I
1464. always try speaking Latvian or Russian to them and they open up their mind and we have a

good relation. My dorm is located in a bit of a dangerous place – that's a problem that I
don't like. In my home university in Japan, there are a lot of exchange students and now I am
the exchange student, so I can understand their mind. When I was studying in Japan I
couldn't understand them, because I'm Japanese and I just wanted to meet them to talk or
to have a party, but now it's the opposite.
Yes, I understand… In Japan, most people don't travel to Latvia, but I was very surprised that
you have a lot of Japanese restaurants over here – sushi, sushi, sushi – so I understood that
Japan is a big country even in Latvia. Yes, I went to Sushi Planet and Kabuki, it's good, but
sometimes it's fake, because most of the owners… every Japanese restaurant owner is a
Chinese or a Korean. I don't miss my home, I am very happy here, I want to stay here.
Yes, I took many photos in the old town, in Sigulda and Jurmala and some people. Last week
when I went to the Japanese students contest, so I took some photos, because I want to
keep memories. Even now, I have uploaded some pictures on the Facebook, to show my
Japanese friends, so they can see how I live here and they send me messages: oh, you look
so happy there! Just, when I talk to my friends on Skype or Facebook and I tell them that I
am really happy here and I can speak some Latvian and Russian now and everything is so
cheap and they say: Oh, it's nice, for you! Latvia is good for you! Before I come here,
everyone said to me: Why did you choose Latvia? Where is Latvia? And now, I have
uploaded on my Facebook the Sigulda caste and everyone said: Oh, it's so good, it's so nice!
Yes, one of my friends, she is in St. Petersburg and she has visited me here.
When I travel I plan everything spontaneously. I just go on the internet and I have noticed
that here everything is very cheap, like the planes Ryanair. So I checked the internet and I
saw that it's so so cheap. I will go to Macedonia and Czech Republic and Iceland, London,
Estonia and Lithuania. I very much want to travel. In January I went to Sweden, during the
exam period – I didn't have any exams and I had almost two months of holidays, so I
travelled a lot. Before I came here I have never stayed in a hostel, and now I have – it's good

way to meet new people and stay in touch still now. It was very nice and I don't like to take
care of the others, so it's very easy for me to travel alone. I don't have any regret to come
1493. here, I really like it here.Now I feel more confident and more brave. My friends just said: *Enjoy your life in Latvia!*

1494. Ge.

Oh. By now I've a working knowledge of Latvian, The main problem is that at high school I
studied Italian as a second foreign living foreign language. But when I went to university I
took some Spanish and went to Ecuador, so... now when I want to speak Italian or Spanish
the other language also always interferes... Right now Latvian tends to interfere with
Spanish, strangely enough. Oh like saying the numbers... I'm so used to it now... going along
the roads looking at the cars the licence plates on the cars and in my head reading them out
in Latvian, so now when I see a number, I'm getting it in Latvian, so I bought a novel in
Spanish to finally look at it and when I opened it on the first page there were numbers and it
took me a really long time to remember what it was in Spanish. I almost wanted to say it in
Latvian. Because it's easy in text or in speaking to stick more or less to one language.
Because when you see it in a written form, I think it is, because when you see it in writing,
than it's obviously something different but when you just have the numbers and they are
written in the same way... and then I have an idea of Chinese, Japanese and now Russian –
that's what makes it difficult... Yes, but I've forgotten almost all of it. Japanese I started
studying once when I went to the USA for a high school year in the USA, but then I managed
to do a little bit more of it when I went to the university but only also one semester, that's
why I'm saying that I forgot almost all of it but not really everything... very strange...
Yeah, pretty much the same story… Although what I did before was ecology and cultural
anthropology. That's what I said earlier. I've already got two "doctorats". No, no, it's equal
to PhD but I mean in Austria the PhD or the doctorate is simpler... it's just mainly based on

writing the dissertation and not so much on doing the research. It has to take you at least four semesters, not more. You have no classes you need to take. It's strange. That's what makes it strange. They are always trying to say that "magister" is equivalent to a Master and "doctor" to a PhD, but in fact master tends to be a bit more but maybe not, depending on what you've done, what courses, studies and doctor is a bit lower, but since it's the highest academic grade you can normally get once you've done some publications or something, even the Americans would reconsider it as an equivalent to a PhD but still it's not quite the same...It's all very stupid! All of my studies are in English. Everything right now. I hope to take some classes in Latvian next semester but I must see about it if it's not a problem, else my university is going to kill me...we get a print out of the course... the study programme we have registered and it adds on so whenever you go to the university whenever you do if there is a change it adds and my print out for one semester has three four , I think pages, as now I am registered as a geography and English teacher training, so that's one but now when I change and I am going to change to English as a major and something else other languages as a minor, then it's a change again so it gets longer and longer. Every change is ... two semesters. It's because it's "Campus Europa" so... it's that programme it has to be. A high school year in the USA when I was 15-16 years old... ehm and then only travelling two months in Europe, two months in Ecuador, two weeks on study tours in China and Japan and the usual things, as Christmas vacation in London, things like that... Usually on my own. But Japan and China it was a study trip it was an essay won competition. I won a prize for it. And organised but the Japanese government more or less. And yeah, if you have stereotypes about Swiss being punctual and organised and Japanese being even more organised, they showed all of those stereotypes to be quite true - they were very well organised. And I mentioned it because I very much like travelling alone and walking around alone sometimes in a Japanese train station and I saw some tourists with backpacks and I thought that it's

quite good to have some organised experiences, just the images of Tokyo subway map – it's as big as that wall... it's sprawling! And it's all written in Japanese, mainly, of course! Of that map... I thought it was pretty good I was on an organised tour – I have seen a lot more than I would've seen by myself. It would be just seeing things by walking around but they had quite a schedule for us. For Spanish! I wanted to see something of the Andes of the South America, to have a look around there and interestingly, Ecuadorians speak a very very good Spanish. It's a South American Spanish but afterwards I've travelled a bit along the Mediterranean, Monaco, the French coast, and especially Barcelona and Granada and Granada, going towards Andalusia and their Spanish sounds like another language! It's very different! Yeah, I went to a language school there. It was quite strange because of the organisational problems, so I first travelled and spoke a lot of Spanish and then went to the language school and got to the highest level of classes there were offering there! I spoke so much travelling alone – it was quite funny, because the Ecuadorians they sound a little bit like Latvians when you learn Latvian! No but I mean when you tell them when you live in "moskovskij forschtadt".So travelling alone a lot of people were saying: "*You haven't been robbed yet?! That can't be true*!"

Yes, interesting languages! And cultures, yes! I have never, well, maybe as a child with my parents, going to Italy but while I was travelling it was never well go to a club and lie on the beach in the sun and something like that! When I came here I thought it was too warm...

that's basically the fault, so to say of the "Campus Europa" . University of Vienna is only a part of Campus Europa for teacher training, I decided since I haven't found a job with what I studied before to take it on the teacher training and well had never gone abroad before that for studying , so when I learned of Campus Europa(CE), I was like sign me in! And since with CE you have to take two stays abroad, I said, than send me to the north-east and the second Spain, or something, so the first I chose Sweden or Latvia first. Many people wanted to go to

Sweden and somebody had been there before, but Latvia – somebody wanted to go there
before, but somehow it didn't work out or something she, it was a she, I was told, was
getting too concerned and then didn't go, so I said that I would go!
Well we are only starting on this programme, I mean now we are talking about the university
of Ankara, which has just joined recently but for the next two semesters might already take
somebody, so I said, Turkey might be interesting for me too, so ok!
it was one and only time before that I have been to eastern Europe and I mean Austria, I live
in the very East, it has the equation minority, this village, it used to be before 1920, it was a
part of Hungary and still the one and only time before that I've been to Eastern Europe, it
was to Hungary as a child and I'm quite certain at that time it was still communism and part
of the Soviet block, so it was like the iron curtain still lives in sort of my generation, so I said,
that I definitely need to go to the eastern Europe! At least to Scandinavia – I mean, I know
it's not Eastern Europe, but still, somewhere where I would have not ordinarily thought of
going that was really the main idea... Just for travelling I didn't think of going to the Baltics.
Somehow, not really not my kind scene, I don't know somehow with eastern Europe
everything was so far away! Hardly any.. the only that stuck was... of course I watched any
documentary that I could find on TV – but it's just the usual – the former part of the Soviet
Union and now developing and developing nicely but having social problems as well, so the
usual... the one thing that stuck with me the most was from the guide which on one page
had some cultural.... advise for the traveller, saying that you should not, preferably talk
Russian to a Latvian and two pages before that it read that Riga has a population of 40-50%
speaking Latvian and 50% speaking Russian, so something i always remember, it was funny!
Just the first day... she picked us up from the airport and she was helping us and talking to
people.... because she was from RTU and she did not know the address and the address... it
was confusing and I was listening intently all that time and it was constantly Latvian, Russian,
Russian, Latvian and sometimes it seemed like in one sentences it would switch suddenly.

Quite funny! I have enjoyed it! I have taken a Russian course before leaving so I had at least some preparation at least in one language that was widely spoken! So I had some idea about it! Well since there were hardly any images there before..... I wouldn't know what to say... I am ... that's why I said, I'm a cultural anthropologist and I try not to come with images of how it has to be. That's... Mike will tell you if you are being honest that first he expects things and then he gets really disappointed.... It was one of the funny experiences talking about expectations and the like... before coming here I had learned that maybe there is a chance for us to do some teaching practice. Because there were some people at the pedagogical faculty that some people I haven't met in person. The responsible, the directors, the director of the school, the professor, and the chief director called me. And I went there and they asked me:" Oh you can teach English! You are studying English? Very Good. How many classes, how many hours do you want to teach? that's what makes it so strange today... it's also for... I've been teaching since September and I can get credit for the teaching practice course and they need it. But it's Michael, my colleague, we used to be roommates. He was promised he said that he could teach... but he said that he had some problems at the school because he was studying philosophy and psychology and the school doesn't have history anymore, or something. it doesn't have psychology but it has something like philosophy. So he could do that but nothing else yet but the faculty of pedagogic are trying to organise it but still he was quite upset because he said that he was promised it and never heard anything but for me it was good, better than I expected and worse than he expected! Yeah, exactly! I didn't expect anything just thought that there may be a chance ... and they started teaching in September when I didn't know whether I needed a work permit and how were they going to pay me... but I started anyway because I needed teaching practice, so let's start anyway! But Mike had a teacher at the school that supported him and that was enough for the university now with me they say that this professor should

have seen me at least once and it was only at the beginning of well... last week and then I
said: what's happening and then the teacher at the school has observed me so I said what
do you need from me so they said anyway it's nearly the end of term? So she said, I need a
portfolio of materials from you and this and that and reflections on your teaching but I have
never heard anything about that.... so now I mean... they have asked me to show some
notes from my teaching. And of course I have them, I have some but they were for me and
none that I would want to show somebody and I've been using „E-klasse" for administration
and entering what we did and what grades the students got so if they want I could show
them that. I only had my notes to enter into the „E-klasse", so I've no idea if that's what the
teacher at the university expects so it's all quite strange. Not English, but I've done some
sort of practice to be a teacher's aid at the kindergarten that's not quite – maybe primary
school children and a little bit higher, helping them to do their homework and something
like that because it's quite difficult for them.
I'm teaching 10th and 11th grade classes, so they are 15 -16 most people I know... There I
am missing the value for comparison and it's very strange because I have 10 b class which
has 18 students and 10e which of 10 students and 10b come from different schools and now
they started chatting yeah sometimes but all in all and not paying so much attention but all
in all usually they follow the teaching so nicely that I tend to think that maybe I should think
of some ideas how to engage them some more just because,,, it's easy that reading and
those exercise trying to explain but 10 English is their 2nd language and German is the main
language they are studying and there are 18 students some on a high level and some on a
very low level and some in-between and they tend to get very loud and I still don't know...
and at the same time they are quite good at tests and I am quite concerned with my
teaching maybe it's not so good and how to make it better but so far nobody had too good
ideas. Mainly what I've notice that the teacher from the school whom I've observed... we do

also have to educate all of the students and what I've noticed that even in Austria people
have been saying also that it is quite good to start off as very strict and then... now they
seem to play a but because they think : „ Oh, we didn't do that bad in tests, so it all should
be all right" and so now it's getting interesting because the semester grades are dew and
next week I am going to show them a film or something to do something nice and I want to
talk to them that 1st test, 2nd test because it officially started later – those were like this,
homework especially those who are very good at English they tend to challenge the teacher
about the grade they should be getting. It's my chance of getting them individually and
telling them: „excuse me, well but when you are only chatting in class..." the problem right
now is that now the situation got o far that when I'm trying to explain to them something
they start chatting so much that some of them don't even notice anymore that I'm trying to
explain something to them.! And it's just... But all in all it's a lot of fun and very interesting
especially because Austria is now discussing how to maybe change the teacher training and
if we don't need to have more practice and I'm reading this in the newspaper online and I'm
thinking that I'm reading about it online and thinking how to put this into correct teaching
and we are discussing some sort... if the students should be separated into different kinds of
schools, which is the system in Austria or should they all be in one kind of school that's what
is interesting for me to have all those different levels here – it's very difficult but I started
trying to work, inventing some more difficult exercises for those who are really good and...
it's still recently I tried it for the first time and what it really shows for the two who would be
very good that it was too difficult for them again. It's very difficult to find the right level! Do
decide what it is. That's the thing. It started quite alright and then the last test I took out of
the book and it was way too easy for them and so ok... how do we do it? But it's... I mean
nobody has complained too much yet so .Something here, something there it's.... I like
sometimes chatting but I don't like socialising much. So, I think I'm talking more to other

teacher colleagues at school than mostly with the students from the class... It's interesting
like my students from the 11th class they don't really want to learn but I want to ... I really
have to force them to do exercises and the like but sometimes I want to focus on
conversation and communication and we've come to a point when it's become quite alright
and they are quite interested in hearing about my experiences and talking about why I don't
drink alcohol and how abnormal it is normal to have a drink and it got to be too... too
informal too much like companionship at times. Recently they complained that it's about
they thought that I was supposed to be their friend... but I've always told them : „*Excuse me*
but I'm also your teacher!" and so they got a printout from E klasse homework
„novertejums, novertejums, novertejums" they didn't do it. It's not very serious but they are
also not the most ambitious students, let's just put it like that! So....They are at the strange
age... but it works sometimes surprisingly well... sometimes we get talking about sex and
drinking and drugs and it works... and I sometimes keep thinking if someone came into this
class for teaching observation, I don't know if it would be a good idea....(laughs) but all in all
they are learning some things... we are certainly practicing talking!
Well also working it seems . Well I think that it's better... as a resident definitely yes, as a
citizen no, because I speak too little Latvian and Russian for that but all in all I don't feel
quite foreign here. There are so many similarities with Vienna for example and with
studying and working here that it feels like being a part of it. Huh, good one! Erm, I can't
quite tell... I realised maybe after 2 months maybe in October that I am going to the school
for teaching and looking around a lot when I was first here I always thought where should I
get off, oh, I 'm going to miss my stop and I have no idea where it is and where do I have to
go and by now I know these usual ways by now and I go my endurance training for the
marathon around *Maskachka*, so I know my usual rounds there so I know... and I think one
point is probably when I got, what is it? My residence permit, I was paid my first salary, so it
was a sign of really living here. Oh it wasn't the main thing, because I only started Russian

so... such a short time a go... well I had started it once before it's one of those languages I
was battling with... it was one of the ideas that it should be good for that... and it seems to
be... I just had too little time to do much homework. Yes, yes. I've also had an intensive
course of Latvian at the university. And at the moment I'm also following a Russian course at the university!

J.:
Everyday I use trolleybus 15, which I have heard is not very safe, but I didn't have any
problems there. I live in a dormitory there and I like it there, yet I don't understand the rule
that we can't meet the Latvian people, because the doors are closed, the doors are closed
between the Latvians and Erasmus students – I have no idea – closed doors. We can go
there, but we always have to go through reception, so they see us but I want to meet
Latvians and not only the Erasmus students, that's why I chose Latvia, because I'm
interested in Latvia and Latvian people, so… Yesterday we went to some sort of party with
some Latvian students… and another strange thing is that they put in one room the people
of the same nationality. I don't get the point of Erasmus being Erasmus living with a Czech
guy, but I'm not in a room with a Czech guy there – so thanks to that rule I'm alone in room,
so that's ok. There is room for improvement there, but of course if the ladies there want any
improvement, because I had a poster on my door and they took it down and said: you can't
have posters on the door! It's like the old times, like of the past – everything prohibited. I'm
not sure how it would be at home – I'm not sure how it is there, because I don't live in a
dormitory, but I live with my parents. As I said, I have all the lectures at Lomonosova iela,
which is a walk away from my dormitory and then I have some here, Visvalza iela, the
Latvian and I take two course, the beginners and also advanced, because I took one
semester, not very intensive in Czech Republic, so here I continue, I and trying to really… I
want to be able to say that Latvian is one of the languages that I speak I'd like to add it there
to my list, even though it's pretty hard, there is some similarity with the Czech language. For

example, the letters. It’s easier for me to pronounce it – well it’s easier for me than for the
French. I have a lecture at Raina bulv. In main building It’s Latvian folklore and Latvian
literature. I do have , I’m really impressed by Latvian folklore that it still survives in the
twenty first century and such huge events like the festival of songs and for me it’s interesting
because also in Eastern Europe this tradition is dying and here it’s still very strong and I’m
going to read some articles. One more, I like to take walks around Riga, mostly on Fridays.
This week Sunday I will visit Dinamo Riga game ,Skonto Riga, because I’m a very sports
person. Here, I play in a football team for exchange students at the Latvian university
building, here we play there are French, Spanish, Turkish guy. There is like ten teams and
there are students of Latvian university. Weekends, for example, last weekend we went to
Jurmala, Majori. I have never seen the frozen see, so it was amazing for me to walk on
water. And as I am still young, I like to go out. We went to Pulkvedis club and we went to
Skyline bar and it’s a good view, but it’s very expensive – just for one drink! It was nice to see
the city. And thanks to Latvia and Riga is so flat. These days are definitely very special. I can
say now really that Riga is my home. I feel like home here. I already know how to get to
some places. I’m used to the life here, I’m used to the people on trolleybus who are not
smiling, I’m used to the drunk people on the streets. So, really, I consider Riga as my home
and I don’t want to change it now. No, I don’t want to go home now! Exactly that, because
it’s the first time for me and that I can take care of myself, because at home I live with my
parents and my mom likes me very much, so here, for the first time in my life I am washing
my clothes, I am cooking, I’m buying food and I’m buying everything for me. So, it’s so good
for me to be here, because I feel like I’m capable to take care of myself.
Well the thing that I’m here that I am with other Erasmus students in my everyday life. I
think the Latvians who live on another floor, they appreciate that I speak Latvian, that I try
to speak Latvia. So when I meet them I always try to say at least the basic things in Latvian –

1742. it’s a good practice. I don’t know, maybe just because I don’t speak the locals language so
1743. well, but maybe it’s just because of being a foreigner not exactly an Erasmus! I don’t know I
1744. can’t answer this question. Probably when I was waiting for half an hour at the Central
1745. Tirgus for number fifteen. I really don’t like that place to wait and this trolleybus was so
1746. overcrowded and then these reception ladies at our Reznas – it was the biggest
1747. disappointment, but yeah… Russian – not yet. But I took with me a book of self-studying
1748. Russian, but I haven’t opened it yet, but I prefer…that many Erasmus students don’t take the
1749. Latvian courses, but for me it is a privilege to be here, so I… those who are in Latvia should
1750. take at least the basics, the beginners course and they know and they have a point that
1751. Russian is more useful to them, but then they have to go to Russian then. Definitely I have
1752. improved my Latvian since I’ve been here. For example with the Polish girls we try to speak
1753. our languages, even though there are great differences between our languages, but I like
1754. Polish very much, because my grandfather was born in Poland and I come from Czech
1755. Republic, which is very close to Poland and I like the Poles and Poland. And another… not
1756. sure… but they tell me about their culture and their language. Also the party with Latvians
1757. was crazy, we had problems with the lady downstairs. She came up and we were running up
1758. and down the stairs – it’s ok, it’s a part of hiding. At first, the most important person was my
1759. buddy through the buddy system. She helped me very much and it is working very well, here

1760. in Latvia that buddy system. Also, I heard not so many events, the ESF here organise all the
1761. trips and parties. All the things they do, we are very thankful to them. Now, mostly I keep in
1762. touch with the people from my floor, the Lithuanian girls, who we hang out with – they are
1763. always feeding me very well. I always come there and there is always some food there – it’s
1764. very nice. Yeah, Erasmus are my main friends here, because I meet them… there are some
1765. Latvian… there is one Latvian girl who talks a lot, because she only speaks Latvian to me and
1766. encourages me to speak to Latvian her, so it’s also.. so it’s almost 50 – 60% maybe 40%

Erasmus, but I hope I will meet more Latvians. Of course I like Erasmus, but since I'm here, I want to meet as many Latvians as possible. Of course now I am in the country not for a long time and want to continue studying Latvian and Latvian culture when I go back. In my bachelor thesis it will be connected, about the annexation of the Baltic states, so… and I'd like to complete my masters on Russian and Eastern European studies an focus on Latvia, because not many people focus on Latvia, not many people speak Latvian, but it is considered an official language of European Union. Yeah, I do have Latvian friends, thanks to the parties, making new friends is so easy here, because when you meet an Erasmus you always have something in common – you are foreigners – so it's very easy at a party just to start talking to somebody else, even the Latvian girls, they are trying to speak English, all the young people – I haven't spoken to any older people. Yeah, cause, my humour is very sarcastic and it's very hard to implement it so early, because not many people are used to that and I don't know these people so much. Because if I met with my friends we would talk totally differently, but I think I am a bit different, I do, because behaviour, I think is connected with language, so I think in English I behave differently. I just feel sometimes more free in English – it's such an easy language to express all the clichés – because there are so many things in English I couldn't say in Czech because they would sound weird. It's thanks to English is so easy and everybody speaks this language so well. I don't know others back home, so I don't know how they behave back home. I don't know, I would have to know them longer time. I hope I will keep in touch with these people after I go back. I have already made pretty strong relationships here so I wish to be in touch with many people from here. I get really tired from telling who I am and what it is that I am doing here – but it's just a part of it, because they also have to do the same and it's important, so it's ok for me. The person you are talking to is hearing it for the first time… It is totally easy to join Erasmus circle. We have something in common. Alcohol

always helps – I shouldn't say that, ha? But it's true that, yeah and I hope that such parties
would not continue all my life… but it's very nice to hang out with them, it's very easy.
I don't know what to answer on that… but how to answer it. As I try to… well I am in touch
with the important Latvian life, the fact that I go to the city and that…. But maybe that I use
English and not Latvian, maybe, I don't know what to say… Yeah, so far, but I think I am
trying my best to contact with Latvians as much as I can, it's probably not a question for me,
but more for the Erasmus students who are not trying to get in touch with Latvians.
Well some kind of new part of my life, very important part of my life, where I am becoming
independent, where I speak almost only the foreign languages, sometimes French with my
French friends and sometimes my head hurts from that, because this thinking in English,
sometimes it's very hard for me this reading in English, speaking in English, studying a new
language it's pretty difficult for my head because I've never had such a long period of
speaking just one language only the foreign language – maybe two weeks maximum – so
that's a new part of my life. That I'm capable to take care of myself and that it's an amazing
thing to meet so many different nations in one place, so I'm very European person, or I'm
not very Czech, I feel more like a European, I would say, so for me it's more like a great
opportunity. And I think it's important for my parents too, because they never had a chance
and me and my sister we were. My sister is in Japan. She speaks the language, she loves the
culture. Her love in Japan and my love is Latvia. My mother is not very happy about that, in
a way she is but she is afraid that we will leave and I definitely want to live abroad in my life,
at least for some time and I think maybe somewhere you have this question, that Latvian
girls are very pretty, so I can imagine myself spending here a longer time. What does being
European mean to me, that I don't feel very nationalistic, even though I like my country but I
think it's thanks to my family – my father is Slovak, my grandfather is born in Poland and
nowadays this is Ukraine and they lived in Uzgorod, it was the former part of Czechoslovakia.

My mom is from Southern part of Czech republic, so we are very… and my grandmother speaks Slovak still, but they are very similar – you can understand it well if you speak Czech. And I don't feel… I am not very proud of some part of the history of my country and I am not proud of the situation right now and I'm not proud with how we are dealing with the twenty years of independence, so there are many things…. I am a big supporter of the European Union, even though it has its bad things, but who and what doesn't because it's a huge project, a very successful project. I would like to see my future somehow connected with the European Union. That's why I'm taking this course right now one course on European Union – it's a very good course, especially the lecturer –I have never met such guy, really amazing, so I'm enjoying this very much. Even though I want and I do tell others about my country, I want to learn as much as possible from them too and because there are so many others, it enriches me. I take a lot of photos. I'm a sort of person, who doesn't look at quality but quantity, so when I come from a trip, I have tonnes of pictures. I take photos of every statue, of every building, also of my friends and I post them on the social server so that people in Czech Republic can see how I am living here. I take a lot of pictures. It's very important for me that my friends from home are still in touch with me trying to get to know what am I doing and how am I doing, really supported me very much because not many people from my community have been somewhere or many of my friends are about to go, for my friends it is amazing to get the information from me and it is very important for me that I am still important for them even though I am abroad, because that means they are good friends. They laugh at my stories and they can because I am very known for not being able to take good care of myself, so they are wondering how can I survive and they laugh at… because I always take pictures of my food and it's always very weird things so, yeah… I haven't had a chance to travel, but I'll have time in June and then some people will come and visit me, so I hope to do it then and the weather will be better than too. I haven't had a

possibility. We want to go to Tallinn and Tartu, To Sweden and Norway and Finland and to
see the countries around. I also wanted to go to Russia and it would be very interesting but
it's very expensive to get a visa. I have already been to Lithuania, so I really like Eastern
Europe. It's really crazy, nothing is like what you expect – the trains are not running on time.
It's like sometimes a jungle to survive and that's what is interesting about Russia. My dream
trip is the Trans- Siberia – this is one things I definitely want to experience once in my life.
My expectations were much worse before I came and about high process, but when I came
I saw many people on the streets selling something, sometimes ridiculous things, that I am
sure they will never sell, or people begging for money, and on the other hand I have never
seen such a big concentration of expensive cars. So I think Latvia has just no middle class,
which means that the economy gets very depressed and I believe it can get much worse. I
have heard very bad things what is about to happen here. But if I had visited some other
even worse places maybe I'd think differently, but Riga is a state in itself and…it's different
here than in the rest of the country. It's crazy, Latvia is 2,2 million and Riga is almost a
million. I definitely don't regret coming here, although many people asked me : *why*? And
they see it pointless of me going here. And I said since I studied history and in many respects
it's similar to Czech twentieth century history – Germans, Russians and I don't know this is
the part of the world that is not very explored and that not many people know. I didn't want
to go I don't know, to Spain or Germany, it would be boring for me – it would be very
predictable - you know in advance what to expect.
Jo.
Yes, I come from Germany. I was born in Germany. Yeah ok so in general at the moment it's
a bit disorganized. I am looking for a room. Of course there are the usual things that I have
to do but, so it a little bit differs from my life in Germany. So I am trying to get things
together. I arrived about two months ago and there is a lot of things to do and I am trying to
get things together. Things are new and some things are missing and it's like this. I try to

remember. So I have class only in the evening and some master course which are only in the
evening, so in the morning – what did I do I don't know so mainly it's often it's like I get up
and write something on the computer some e-mails to the people back home and so yeah
doing homework and then see what to do. I have a roommate he is also an Erasmus student
and also from Germany. Yeah it's like this that on the whole floor there are all Erasmus
students so they put all Erasmus students on one floor and people of the same nation they
put in one room. I don't know if it's so good but that's how it is. I came here to get to know
Latvia and get to know some Latvian people and now on my floor there are no Latvians but
more Italians – so could rather learn Italian than Latvian because I hear Italian all the time.
Usually I am having lunch and go to the university if I have classes. That's different –
sometimes we have some excursions if we have some time and manage to do it so once
we've rented a car and went on a trip through Latvia and visited Estonia for a weekend so
that was very nice. Some other times I use Saturday for relaxing or maybe buying some new
staff, some shopping . Err now Sundays, as I am a student of theology I usually go to church,
I sometimes visit a German service, sometimes I go to a Latvian service. Sometimes I go to a
service in Latvian and I also want to visit an Orthodox one but I haven't managed yet.
So on daily basis, like I don't know, I don't know for me at the moment it's different than
what I thought it would be. I'd like to get to know more people here, more of the country
and it's more like I'm doing my staff so and more what I have to do for the university and
maybe it's more normal than how I thought something. Yeah so maybe I thought it would be
more different to what I'm used to being at home. Of course it would be if I liked all those
parties, but these are not the things I like to do. At the moment it's more like doing staff for
university and getting things done and yeah and at the moment I'm getting the feeling of
how to manage things. Yes, so I wasn't really homesick but it was more that I was angry with
things that go here, so I don't know maybe it's something like a little bit of culture shock or

something but it was... Maybe I was a little bit somewhat exhausted. There was a woman
living in my future room and I was… so she is in the church I know. And I was helping her to
get out and it was really a hard work and putting all this staff out of her room and after this I
was really exhausted and there were some workers helping and yeah and I was kind of angry
why they didn't help so much and why they were kind of a little lazy. It was last week or a
little before last week and soon after this I fell ill because I was so exhausted and then I was
a little bit like, I thought: " *it's stupid here*". So I saw pictures and I saw some, I read some
reports from other students, so I had a little impression. Of course I knew what it looked like
and what people are like and of course I didn't know what it would be like to be on the
streets and how maybe daily things and shops. One strong example is like the daily travel on
trolleybus number 15 and to see how all these people are and they don't smell very good
and it's always very silent and it seems to be well I don't know what atmosphere I should
describe but it's not a nice atmosphere for me, so I always feel like I am very… I don't know…
I'm feeling very foreign, not really fitting in. I think of this mainly because you don't have
direct contact here, to people here and you speak to students or native students but usually
we don't have much contact… and on this trolleybus there are just some normal people or
the poor people… so it's for me it's like hard to get together two things because like the daily
life on the streets and public, it always seems to me that people are a little bit rude or not
so polite and like the old women who push you away and you think: why? We don't do this
at home or something. And it's really the opposite to what you experience at people's
homes when you get invited. They are always very polite and very friendly people, so it's
hard to get these things together. I did some courses like one beginner course and half of
the advanced speaker's course and then when I was here, when I arrived I did an intensive
course for beginners and now I am doing the next course and now I manage so speak small
sentences in the street and in the shops so I it's not like anything big, but I hope maybe it will

improve when I get to know meet more people speaking their native language. So now I am
moving into a flat where some Latvians live, so I can learn some Latvian or at least to listen
to some. In January it was quite ok because I had a single room which was cheap and very
nice and in February I got a roommate and he is a very nice roommate but it's like too less
space for me now and yeah it's too less for me and the dormitory is so far out and the
people in this area are not so nice and I thought maybe it would be better for me to move
and closer to the centre where the room would be cheap and where I have my own room
and I think this would be better now and I hope to move this weekend. It's hard to say what
it is because I haven't visited so many. But it's like meeting somewhere - some club or some
pub and having a drink and having fun together. Different people, so, those from the classes
that I meet regularly, the classes in theology, the humanities and the language course and
the classes with Erasmus students of these Baltic courses. There are at least three groups of
students that I meet, then there are the people from the church that I know there, the
pastor and of course the people from the dormitory that you see regularly and my
roommate and there are only few Latvians that I know there are some one or two who were
in Germany before and who I know very well and I met them in Germany and one girl who I
meet for couple learning Latvian so those are some single people I'm meeting here.
I think you are always reflecting on others and yourself, your experiences I think with all
these people, it's hard to describe, or it's hard to bring it all to one point, it's like just you are
experiencing or recognizing new things and what's different in other cultures and you
compare it to what's it like at home… yeah I think it happens.
Yeah very much so. I really like photography. I think I'm photographing everything that
interests me or that's around me and that's very nice. So, first I was photographing many
buildings that are new and beautiful. I took some photos of parties, of nature and Latvian
countryside and always everything. One thing is that I have it later to have one thing to

remind. Of course this is like a hobby, a simple cause and of course it's the art and the
beauty that I see and that's going on. I think my thinking on my part of about them it's
almost the same it hasn't changed… I am not sure what they are thinking of me, maybe they
are thinking I'm a little crazy because I am doing this and just left to some state that's
unknown and not so popular to visit and at the end I left my girlfriend back home and she
too is in South Africa right now so that's really… I think many people think that we are totally
crazy and because we left to visit some totally different places now and yeah… Yes, of course
there are really students from all nations, from very many different nations, like the students
from Ireland and Italian and even people from Poland, Georgia, Ukraine, and Estonia and all
of them have different views of things and they compare it in every way and so it's really
interesting to see what's the difference between my country and their country and what we
see when we are here. We see different things, and we experience different things so I think
like this guy I know from Estonia who says that it's rather similar here just a little bit
different and then there are others who say it's totally different and maybe only few things
that are similar. Yeah yeah I have learned about other countries because they tell what their
home, what their family is like and little things about their language and how it works and
some examples you have to try and all those things are very interesting. I don't know maybe
I'm still not very happy with the situation with accommodation and I hope that will be
different soon.I think it depends on who you get to know. First contacts were on the
language course, which was very nice and it was a small group and you got to know
everybody there and some contacts were stronger and some few. It depends on
personalities and sympathies. Others you meet in classes, but there it's hard to get to know
people, it's like because the Latvians they don't' say like: "Hello, I didn't invite you
somewhere, to some sort of place." It's hard to get to know them and you have to put much
energy of your own so then it will work better. So, most contacts I have from people I

already now and they know people and so it’s much easier than with people you don’t know at all. Well I’m not sure, maybe like in Germany, we think these Erasmus people are all a bit crazy, they just come to have party and then they go away. So maybe Latvians think in the same way, so let them do I don’t know and a lot of them think like they don’t want to get to know them but also maybe it’s also the national mentality. Something like this making friends so quickly, I don’t know or maybe because they are more introverted than people from other countries like the Italians, it’s very nice and of course it’s very easy to get to know them, because they are extraverted. Maybe a little friends with Latvians and spending some time and having tea or something once a week. At the moment it’s only few. It’s very good to know them and it’s very helpful to know them they help you with many things. But I don’t meet them regularly, like I’m integrated into their lives, it’s more like to meet from time to time and see what’s going on. Most contacts are with foreigners at the moment.

Yeah, I hope I’ll keep in touch with people from here. I know one guy here and we did many things together here and I have a stronger relationship with him, while with other I’ll see how it goes on and I’ll see what it will be like after a year. I think it is very easy to join the Erasmus circle, because you meet in public places and sometimes there are things organized by the same people, I think there would be no problem to join us at the parties or to come and see us at our floor, because, I think everybody knows that we live there, but I think just people don’t do it, and I am not sure exactly why, but maybe it’s because of the language difference, because we, the Erasmus people, we are very used now to speaking English, but maybe the native people are not that used or maybe they don’t want to speak English in their native country. In fact we don’t see many native people in the Erasmus circle.

So I think one of the goals of course is like personal learning and personal experiences and widening your personal horizon, but I think this will just happens so I think it happens anyway and not the goal I want to achieve. So, it’s more like that I want to learn the

language to get to know the people and of course I want to study the local religions and theology and how things work in practical and daily life and maybe some insight so these are things I would like to know – these are not the deep insights but you can get an idea and I think it's possible in half a year. Maybe I'm a little bit more serious now, because I have met people who live in much worse conditions than we do in Germany. Maybe now I would laugh a lot at what Germans call as problems, because many of them don't really have problems, they just make their own problems and I think life here is just more serious and more like a true, real life because it's not like so luxurious… so I think that's the main difference about the difference in how I think the problems that people have and what they do with their lives. I think I do see people back home differently now. There are certain aspects that I like about them that these typical national attitudes that they have and that I like the people here and like I say, now I would say when I come back: "relax, this s not a real problem". Yes, I am happy, although it's not easy all the time but I think it's a good experience.

Ka. not so much. I have only been to Germany. About Germany? Err I studied German language during secondary school. I have studied it, but I can't say I know this language. Yeah, I studied it for 3 years but literature. I have learned only very basic things. And when I went to Germany, I was very disappointed, because I thought maybe I'll learn it over there, but it wasn't that easy with the German language. Yeah, but also to visit my family and friends there. No, no, not any more than that, unfortunately! Hmm yeah, maybe my last journey to Germany has influenced me, because I was visiting my friend who was on Erasmus scholarship and I spent about two weeks at her dormitory with other Erasmus students, and I saw how the Erasmus students' life is like and I asked her how to apply and she explained to me what kind of papers I needed. And, honestly, when I came back from the visit I thought, ok, maybe I'll also decide to go for this kind of scholarship.

I had an option to go to Latvia, because I studied Russian during my studies, so I wanted to improve my Russian. Ok, I could also go to Russia, to Archangelsk or Irkutsk, but I didn't want to – it's so far and so cold there. I also had an option to go to Rezekne, to the University of Culture, but at the end I found out that they don't have philology there, so the only option was the University of Latvia. Before I left Poland? Err… Mostly I associated it with Russia, with Russians, Russian people. Errr… I couldn't distinguish so much, Russia, Latvia… for me Latvia, Estonia, everything was one…yeah… err… now I think each of them is different, especially after the independence, I can see that Latvia is like Latvia and not… We've been to this parade and saw the fireworks, and with lights, it was nice. It was the first time I have seen such a celebration of independence in the capital during this celebration. Because in Poland, I have never been in the capital during the day of independence, so I have never see how it looks like in the capital of the country. To be honest I didn't have any big knowledge or images of Latvians, because I didn't know any persons Latvians. And now I know it. honestly, it's a little big positive and negative - I don't know if these were Latvians or Russians, because once we went to the "Studentu klubu" it was in the club and they said that they didn't want foreigners there, so that only Latvian students can go inside. And they didn't let us in. We were 5 people and he asked us whether we could go out, because he just said it was it's only for Latvian. Also, I have observed a fight on the trolleybus between two women, one of them was Russian and the other was Latvian And the Russian woman was angry with the Latvian one that she speaks only Latvian and not Russian! And the other… I can't remember. But, for example those I know Latvians and Russians, because I have classes with them and they are very nice and friendly. I can say that. But, for example, I don't know whether I can say about it, but they show in some services, people are not very friendly with foreigners and they are afraid or not afraid but angry that we are from another country. Yeah, because I know that in Poland, my experience, for example when someone speaks

English, I know that the Polish people are even friendlier to the foreign persons than they
are to the Polish person… I don't know… we very often talk about it with other Erasmus
students, that the attitude to people who speak English is terrible, so I try to speak Russian if
I can. A foreigner in my country or …? It's a person err who comes from a different country,
sometimes from a totally different culture, has different habits than me, for example,
and**** but we can learn a lot of good things from him and he can teach us too.
Yea, it's strange for me, before I came here I thought that they would put a different person
from a different country with a person from a different country in the same room, but me
and Kasia live in the same room and I'm from Poland and Kasia is from Poland too and we
live in the same room. I think this has a positive side maybe, but on the other hand it's good
to live with a person from another country, we would talk more in a different language. But
I think that our floor is rather international. There are many people from other countries
there and we spend only the hours that we sleep together in our room. No…Yeah, I was at
the theatre, it was a Latvian play, because it was from our English class and the teacher
offered us the tickets and she thought that we had to go even though we don't understand
Latvian, because it's great thing just to be at the theatre and we had a great time. It was a
Latvian title, something about April, I don't remember. In a way it was fun to see something
in a different language, but it wasn't so nice interesting if you watched it in a language that
you understand. Especially when people were laughing and I didn't know why they were
laughing, because there was a joke.
hmm….classes, we have many classes with the Latvians, because of English, of course and
we have also sometimes we have a lot of contact with the people from organization ESN,
which members are Latvian students and they organize a lot of trips for us, a lot of parties
for example at the beginning this "Crush" party, they have also organized a trip to Liepaja, to
Stockholm, yeah, two weeks ago, a weekend trip and now some people are going with them
to Lithuania, they also organize some movie evenings, they come to our dormitory with

some dormitory, they also organize going to opera, theatre and they are very very nice. They also attach a student buddy to each Erasmus student. And with the buddy scheme it's nice too. I could rely on my buddy. They took me to the hospital, I mean to the doctor, got me some food and medicine when I had a cold. Err, I mean… I'm a kind of a person that time can show to call somebody a real friend, I can't say that a good…acquaintances among the Latvians. Yeah. It's different at home…Sometimes, I need a lot of time to call somebody a friend but here, we live 24 hours together, going to classes together, going on different trips together, and we are far away from home, we have, every person has their own life and their problems and we are in some ways forced to rely on each other and be… we need each other and on the other hand we have great fun together. Hmmm, should I count? I don't know, there are many people from Erasmus students that I could call like that and who… there are a lot friends together. But it's hard for me to count them… ok, among Erasmus students there are here, there are about 140 people and among these 140 people there are maybe 20 who are really together.I think I have to say thanks to my buddy and her friend, because they took me from the bus station, they took me by taxi to our dormitory. They even invited us to some kind of party, they introduced us to other people. And the friend of my buddy was also a buddy of other people, Erasmus students, so we also got to know each other thanks to our buddies – so I think that our buddies were the first people here among many who helped us. And even before I came here, I received a lot of mail from my buddy and she asked me to before I come here if I could bring… she explained that in her company, who has some connections with Poland, that it's a tradition in her company that every person who comes from a different country brings a plant, a special kind of a plant and she asked me to bring a special plant and she asked me that it would be a mark to recognize each other at the bus station. It was very nice of her. And I found in Poland… and other, she wrote to me many times in Poland that you are not alone that I'm waiting for you here and

it was a great support because I felt that I won't be alone and I knew that at least one person is waiting for me and someone who can help. The first day it was strange, but I think that it's normal when you are going to every country, to a foreign country, you don't know where to go and you hear a strange language around that you don't understand, so my first impression was Latvian language, Latvian titles and for me everything was strange that I couldn't understand, but now it's different… Oh, yeah, I know the Doors, I like them very much! err… sometime I feel… yeah to some extent… I think when I knew more people, Erasmus people, together we made a group of foreigners, I want to say that when also we meet together with the Latvian ESN students, err… I can say that when I knew more people, I felt more safe and better. Maybe not adapted 100%, like some… but… Err Resident. Now we had to make our residence permit, so when I saw this residence title – oh, I said that's resident for me! Yeah, I think that's resident. Err… firstly, I improved my English, I think; secondly, err it's good experience when you're afraid of some speeches in front of others, because here I have a lot of friends and when I have to do it in front of foreigners it's even worse, but I think that now I like it and I think that now when I have to speak in front of a big group of people, Polish people it won't be stressful for me. Another experience, improvement… err… maybe the feeling that I can manage to do something by myself in a foreign country… yeah that I'm independent and I can do a lot! Yeah, I think even if spent only 2 months here, I still would have learned a lot, much more than when I would stay in Poland, both personal and academic development. Eerr… you mean, something like? err… I think that I understand foreign cultures much more experience, international experience. I have studied a lot about other cultures and countries and. I can't say that I'm not Polish anymore, because it is who I'm inside always, more like the international side of me has changed. I've also changed my mind, my opinion about, I could err… damage some theories, some opinions that I had before…Yeah, I intended to improve my Russian, but here

2120. I can only take this Russian course and to take Russian philology is too difficult for me , yeah
2121. and it's mostly not suitable for me, so most of the subjects I have to take from English
2122. philology, so I improved English. I thought about improving English and Russian, but I
2123. improved English, but as concerns improving Russian, I thought before coming here that it
2124. would be better… the subjects from English philology and some subjects from Baltic states
2125. are also in English. Yeah, that's right and in Latvian I've started to do something but it's
2126. nowhere near good. It's a very difficult language for me … yeah because, really, the
2127. grammar, I don't know… for instance I had most of my classes of Japanese… It's different
2128. when you study a language because you want to study it and when you study it because you
2129. come to the country and you would like to know something, how to say it but you don't
2130. have such a big motivation to study it, because err… in Japanese, for example,… when I go
2131. back to Poland, I don't know if I'll use Latvian, because I've not studied it before and maybe
2132. that's right… that I know that it's only for this time. Ok, I would like to continue it in Poland,
2133. but I don't think it will be possible for me… When I want to buy something I have problems
2134. to explain something, but after some times, after a long time, but we manage to understand
2135. each other. Yeah, we manage. The thing is that I know that I'm not a native speaker and I
2136. have the right to make mistakes, so I think I'm not afraid to talk, because they won't
2137. understand me. Sometimes they don't understand me in Russian but in English it's mostly
2138. ok, because I know Russian less than English, but sometimes I make mistakes because of my
2139. dictionary (=vocabulary). I've learned their habits, their cultures, at which time they usually
2140. get up, for example, I understand about Portugal. Then other celebrations and some
2141. festivals, and the food they cook, their music, their films. One night we watched a Hungarian
2142. movie… so it's a lot of things, really. Also what they thought about Poland, what types of
2143. stereotypes they have. No, actually I knew, even when I was in Poland, I knew what kind of
2144. stereotypes that other countries have about Poland, so I wasn't surprised. Some of them

yes, but a lot of them are not true. Some are bad. For example, for German people, Polish
people are those who steal everything, who damage a lot. Not good, kind of ashamed…
yeah… Probably when you go through Poland you can find it… Yeah….Yeah, sure…. If had not
come here… studying from TV, books, Internet is not the same than when you are
experiencing it yourself, meeting these people. Development.

Kat:
As I've mentioned I was 3 weeks in Russia, in St Petersburg, on a Russian language course.
I've been many times in Germany, because I have a family there, not only on the Western
side, but also on the Eastern side, because I also have my family near the border with France
and 2 weeks in Italy, so I have some experience with Italians err... and only couple of days,
like trip to err Czech Republic, Hungary…In St. Petersburg I was on my own, for the first time
I was alone for a while and other times I was travelling together with my family or friends or
classmates from the secondary school. Yes, probably yes, because I have experience with
foreigners and I thought that it would be better for me to err… spend more time with them,
to to… better know each other, especially know each other, especially when I got to know
that there was also a possibility to spend more time with Russian people and Latvian people,
more the eastern part of Europe, because previously I didn't have such experience, so it's
better to know not only western and southern part of Europe but also the eastern part.
I didn't have so many possibilities at the very beginning because of the scholarship, because
I wanted really to study Russian and they said that there are two countries maybe where I
could study Russian , these were Lithuania and Latvia. In Lithuania there were very many
people going there, also from my institute, but Latvia, I was the only one, so I was the first
one on the list, so I knew that I definitely will go, so it was important for me. No, no, it was
my own choice. Yeah! Before… actually I didn't have experience before with the Latvians. I
didn't have my own experience, my own attitude towards Latvians and Latvia, but I think

that from the former *** I thought that eastern part of Europe has only like the Russian attitude towards the whole world. So, for example when I would meet a Russian and Latvian guy from Latvia, I wouldn't know if he is Latvian or Russian, but now I have this division, so I don't know why but – different behaviour, different style, different attitude to life. I don't know how to explain. I met one Russian guy, who speaks err mainly in Russian, so I speak only in Russian with him, and so he told me many many things of his own experience with Latvians and with Russians. And when we were walking through a street, I saw, for example, when there were two guys, tall guys, going very, how could I say this, in a cool style through the street, I already thought that they were Latvians, and he said, five minutes later he said that really actually they were Latvians, because he asked them later, because he wanted to check it if I was right. So, maybe I don't know, it's a kind of feeling inside, I don't know, because they are not so visual signs of being Russian or Latvian, I don't know, maybe I don't know why it's really… Oh.. hmm… for me a foreigner is a person with a completely different tradition, culture from me, errr... For me, for example a foreigner is also a person who is from the southern part of Poland, even from the same country, so the same main culture, but a different sub-culture, so that's also for me a foreigner. Hmmm yes, I feel like a foreigner, yes. Err, I think I should spend a little bit more time here to feel not like a foreigner. And at least I should know a little bit more Latvian, to feel really compatible in a group of Latvians. No, no. probably no time, but we didn't have such a possibility to join some club, I didn't know there are some clubs at the university or around the university that I could join. So… but also probably the reason is time… Yeah, with Karina, we spend a lot of time together, but also with other people, so… and actually we spend our time rather actively. So every single day is like a new experience, a new activity in our life and, for example, for me, when I was in Poland, I didn't go to the theatre, cinema, or to the club so often as here. Here, it's at least once a week – club, cinema, maybe once in three weeks – a

theatre – so it's a lot of experiences in a short time. I don't know, maybe err… I would like to
spend as much time on doing something, as in comparison with my time in Poland, because
in Poland, I know that I have time for everything, I live there and what I didn't do previously,
I can do it later, but here, I know that I only have few months, and I have to spend them
very actively and I have to feel that I have done it all. I have experience from my classes,
from English classes, hmmmm because like Karina has mentioned her buddy… before my
arrival here, I also e-mailed to my buddy and contact with her, but she said that she would
be back in Riga only after 10th of September, because she has now holidays, so I thought
that I will be alone in the beginning, without my family… so when I needed her, she wasn't
here, so I thought, that from Karina, I'll take her own buddy and we'll be together. And I still
have contact with her and not with my own buddy. So, I know only know her name – Zanda.
But Olga is not Karina's buddy, she is from the organization ESN. But Karina's buddy… her
name is Ieva. Hmm…. rather not, at least not yet. They offered us to go outside somewhere,
but there is actually no time for this, we have so many interesting activities that we have to
divide our time into small pieces. I would go altogether. Once I can spend time with my
university students and the other with Erasmus. I don't know, actually I don't know …
because I don't know the students from our group so much, so … yeah, so… it's hard to say.
yes, I would feel more comfortable with the Erasmus students. Maybe because we live
together, we spend so much time together, and err… they really… we really know each other
very good, so… much better than the university mates. Yes, I think yes, there are couple of
people that I can say that there are some people, who are my friends. We knew only the first
meeting with Erasmus student scholarship, so it was maybe in March, so we know each
other since march, so it's not for a long time. I think Karina and her buddy and a couple of
friends from Northern Italy who were here before our arrival, because they were here on
the Erasmus intensive Latvian course for one month, since August, so they knew already

2220. many things in Riga and we were with them in the city centre, they showed us everything,
2221. on the map, how much things cost. Hmm…my cultural shock was not at the very beginning, I
2222. don't know why, but not at the very beginning, because at the very beginning everything
2223. was very new for me and I wanted to experience many things from the very beginning, but
2224. later on I felt that I don't know that I missed some things, and… but maybe I'm not very
2225. prepared for being and staying here for so long, so maybe that was the time when I felt the
2226. cultural shock. The weather was not very good (laughs), we had big problems at the
2227. university with our agreement and some paperwork and I thought that maybe we are not in
2228. very good contact with our friends from Erasmus and we had problems with the Latvian
2229. students from our University, some kind of… and all of these things altogether were in one
2230. piece and I thought that maybe I go home and also me and Karina we were both sick at the
2231. same time, so that was horrible for us… it was a difficult time. I think those two weeks were
2232. so hard for us that we had to choose to stay or not. Err… I feel very good now. Yes, I think
2233. that yes. After this difficult time was over, it was better and better and now it's really good.
2234. It was from the second half of September until the first days of October. Yeah, I feel like a
2235. resident, quite comfortable and stable. I think now I know myself more than previously an
2236. I didn't have this experience with so many people that I really don't know. And I didn't know
2237. really that in a short time I can meet so many people and know them mmm very err… well.
2238. Yes, I think so. I think that now I'm more open to new experience, to new things, to new
2239. people, than previously. To tell the truth, I never felt like being only from Poland, with the
2240. Polish identity, I always, I was always searching for my own place in the world and I know
2241. that maybe it's not in Riga, but there is always this place somewhere else in the world. So
2242. there is a more international identity in me, rather than just Polish. There is no place for me
2243. to which I belong, at least not now. Mmm now I feel it even more… before I thought that
2244. maybe it is Poland , ok, but maybe it's a matter of some kind of need to… of getting new

2245. experiences or meeting with other people. But now I know that it's not only that something
2246. I had inside before, but it came out now. I don't know we'll see, but I hope that I'll cope with
2247. it somehow. Yes, I think so, yes, I'm really afraid of coming back to Poland, because hmm, for
2248. me this time is very special and after my arrival to Poland, I would like to go abroad again,
2249. maybe not here, but next time I'd like to travel abroad to visit my friends from Erasmus and
2250. to visit my friends who are on the Erasmus from Poland and also to go to work somewhere
2251. for a longer time , to I don't know ***, or even to my friends from Bulgaria, I don't know… I
2252. have lots of possibilities. And now I know that I'm able to do it. Because I'm here, my main
2253. aim was to improve my Russian, to use the Russian language, to develop my language skills.
2254. Yeah, I had problems with English, but now I think that, I don't know how it happened that
2255. my English is very good, even better than how I thought it could be . I'm really surprised.
2256. And now I see that I can express myself better even in English than in Russian . So, for me… I
2257. think I speak more English. There are many people in our dormitory that I can only speak
2258. English with them, but there are some who I can also speak Russian, like with the Georgian,
2259. but it's not obligatory that I speak Russian every single day, in the shop, yes, of course, I can
2260. speak in Russian, in the trolleybus, in the class, but it's always very limited. Err it wasn't my
2261. goal, no it wasn't, but I think that my purpose of studying Latvian was err… only because I
2262. can't live in the society of which language I really don't know, even that I speak really bad
2263. Latvian, for Latvians it would be very nice to speak with them in Latvian, then they feel like
2264. more comfortable and more safe. Yes, some kind of, mmm, yes, out of some kind of
2265. respect. Maybe I haven't put a lot of effort into learning Latvian, but at least I'm trying... it's
2266. only for this time… maybe there will be one day but I will try to learn Latvian for longer
2267. maybe in my future I can use it for work?! There certainly arise some problems from time to
2268. time in communication between Erasmus students, but we talk about the stereotypes that
2269. we all have and try to understand each other, despite our individual preconceptions.

We often have discussions, some kind of argument, even maybe, for example about food, so I have understood that Portuguese, for instance eat very late, that from the Western point of view they are lazy and always sleep very late and I see that “typical Portuguese” are very laid back. And the Portuguese people in our dormitory get on very well with the Georgians – maybe it’s their similar lifestyle that helps them understand each other better?! And another example, is the Hungarian girl at our dormitory, who likes to study a lot. She always argues with the Portuguese guy. Yes, she likes him, but they come from different cultures. They can sit till late hours and discuss what could be the possible cultural differences between them. By observing and taking part in all this, I definitely have learned a lot for myself about people from other cultures. Yes, it has changed a lot. I can appreciate my country much more right now. Here I feel proud of being Polish. Before I always thought that people had bad opinions about Polish, but I understood that it’s not like that, it’s not true. Also, I understood that being Polish and matching or not matching with the stereotypes that the Polish have and other people have of the polish people are two different things. Now I can tell, that at least the people from the dormitory have changed their opinions about Poland and Polish people. Erasmus experience is something that I cannot have in the future. It’s one in a lifetime. Meeting new people in a new country is something different from the regular experience that I had in Poland. Discovering new cultures together not with the natives but with other foreigners. I also understood how important it is not to think about the whole nation, based on one experience with the person representing this or that culture.

R., V., Jo.:

R.: Economics. It’s was my first time abroad, it was very strange for me and I was crying all the time when I got here. I came here and I was lonely, no friends. Because a lot of the students are coming here with their friends. And I was the first student who came here, to Latvia on an Erasmus. It took come courage!

V.: Just as a tourist in England, Wales and France.

J.: I lived in Ukraine for 5 years. I studied in Ukrainian, not in English and I wanted to study in English, so I came over here. I wanted to study for MA. I've applied to this university and I got the funding, so I came here.

R.: I can answer for me – we have an agreement with this university, so… I couldn't really choose because with what I'm studying and our partner universities this is the only possibility.

V.: I didn't have much choice either and it's expensive to go Western Europe.

J.: I knew nothing about them before coming here. I found some information about population and currency and the most interesting one is that one Lat is 2 dollar.

R.: Yeah, your money is very valuable, I don't know – reliable – I don't know the adjective for this.

J.: reliable? Strong?

R.: Yeah, that's the word!

J.: It is, because for us, foreigners, we come here and have to change the currency. You got to *** tirgus and ask for something and you buy something for less than 5 Lats. Actually you are spending less than 10 dollars. If you compare or convert it to your currency of your country it's like hundreds of thousands.

R.: Yeah, for me it's three times much more expensive than at home.

J.: Yes.

R.: When I first came here, I was really shocked. But I think it's a small country, small population, but still your money is stronger than Euros, three times stronger than my money. Everything, in the shop, transport at the university, at the dormitory is expensive. And as you know for Erasmus they can give us some grant for students. It's not much – less than you expect. And they give less if you come here than if you go to Germany for example. And here it's more expensive than Germany! So at first I thought it's small and cheap country.

R.: Yeah, my opinion has changed!

R.:I thought that people here were very friendly. Yes, I think so, but not all the time you really have to find them – sometimes they are nice!

V.: In Hungary people think that you are Russian. They think that Latvia is Russia. I also thought that.

J.: I thought that it was full of foreigners speaking foreign language (laughs)

J.: There are many Turkish here, so…

2329. R.: I live in a dorm – there are no exchange students, no friends and I am always in a room
2330. and feel very lonely sometimes. I don't have any friends.
2331. R.: Yes, most of them live in Kipsala and I live in Teika!
2332. R.: Yes, it is very far!
2333. V.: Well there are no other Hungarians here… well there is one other Hungarian – it's a girls,
2334. she is studying at the Latvian university but I see her maybe once in two weeks – it's not
2335. much.//
2336. V.: It's both sides – foreign and not foreign!
2337. J.; Sometimes I feel like at home when I'm with friends, friends like people from home.
2338. When I'm not with them – I still feel like I'm not at home here.
2339. R.: as I said I live at the local student accommodation and there is just one more girl – she is
2340. foreign, she is a student from Erasmus Poland but I almost never see her. I was really
2341. dreaming of living with students from other countries. The first time I was really
2342. disappointed for me, but than I asked at the administration and they couldn't do anything
2343. about it – it was full at Kipsala, but in December it's the last month for me here and they said
2344. that maybe I can go and live in Kipsala.
2345. R.: Of course. I have seen them, but everybody has their own life and things. I can meet
2346. some people in the cooking room, I mean kitchen saying hello, but sometimes they just
2347. come and don't say anything. Maybe girls are better than boys – or it's about language,
2348. because girls are better at speaking English than boys. That's to talk in general!
2349. J.: Yeah, I agree, in general more girls speak English than guys! Maybe because I spoke to
2350. more girls than guys (laughs)
2351. V.: I live in Kipsala, in one flat and I'm sharing a room with someone from Spain.
2352. J.: And I'm renting – it's very expensive to rent. I have also been offered accommodation at
2353. the hostel, but I declined it, because I want to live with my girlfriend.
2354. J.: Ukranian and Nigerian we came together from Ukraine.
2355. J.: I'm a member of student parliament.
2356. J.: I have to represent the interests of the Erasmus students and they want to understand
2357. what's our problems or difficulties are?
2358. R.: You are lying! They haven't helped me.
2359. J.: No no – that's true! I've told them everything the other students shared with me and they
2360. promised to give us some feedback and we went to the dean – that he will do something

about our problems. The major problems are about the accommodation! That's the major
problem and the Dean said that he will do something about it – maybe already next month.
R.: I went to see a concert – there was a Turkish pianist. It was very nice – liked it very much.
J.: Do they have any English movies here?
V.: Yeah, they are not dubbed.
J. Is it cheaper to go in the morning?
J.:I don't have much time.
J.: I went to celebrate the Independence day! And I enjoyed the parade and the fireworks
everywhere.
J.: I called her, wake up wake up, why are sleeping you should be there?!
V.: I saw the fireworks from the hostel! It's a good location!
R.: There is one guy I met – Rihards – that's all!
V.: I don't meet the local students that much we are usually together with other exchange
students, foreigners – it's a big group and we spend a lot of time together.
J. I have some friends with Russians - *** he is a very nice guy, a very good friend of mine.
And then other members of the students' parliament, then some people I meet on my way
home and some situations.
R.: I don't have a very good image maybe of the locals, because when I just arrived, because
they told me that someone will pick you up and take you to the accommodation, but no one
was there! So I tried to call Tipans (the head of the exchange program)
R.: But everything turned out to be ok!
R.: I understood that people have to be patient! So something good will happen!
V.: And they've lost my luggage at the airport on the way here, so I was without my luggage
for two days, but than I got my luggage and it was ok!
R.: Maybe in my case there was some miscommunication, because they didn't have my flight
details but I was very stressed. When I came here the dormitory was not aware that I was
coming. They sent me to Teika.
J. I lived away from my country for 5 years, so I knew that in different countries they do
things differently, different style of doing things.
R.: For me it was very strange that the bus drivers are woman. It was very strange for me – in my country it's not like that!
J.: It's not on the bus – it's trolleybus and tram – no bus!
R.: still strange, really! But otherwise I only think about the prices! I don't eat pork, so it's
hard sometimes to find something for me outside.
V.: Yeah, about food – here they all it "goulash", but it's completely different! Yeah, it's…

2395. V.: I'm not that good at cooking..
2396. J.: I think of figures in my head everyday – trying to convert the currency! Because anything
2397. you want to do you have to think about the price. In Ukraine, for instance with 5000 grivens I
2398. can get like 3 loaves of bread, I can get for a dollar – here I can get maybe one, the lowest I
2399. can get is 38-39 santimes! Here you can maybe buy bread, sausages and Coke and sleep for
2400. the whole day because you can't afford anything else! Yeah, if you bring 1,000 USD – that's
2401. something. Somebody like me – I have to pay for my flat, for the communal fees, transport,
2402. shopping – I go to *Rimi* – other shops they say it's not safe!
2403. R.: I'm staying here for 5 months and I think it's enough.
2404. J.: Yeah, I only have problems with practical things – I don't have problems with people, no!
2405. R.: I feel like a tourist!
2406. J.: I'm in the middle between tourist and survivor!
2407. V.: I feel like a survivor, because I have survived! It's not like tourist, because for a tourist it's
2408. like one month or even less – it's more like a tourist…
2409. R.: Yeah and I still feel like a tourist because I don't speak Latvian or Russian so well.
2410. You(John) do.
2411. J.: Yeah but I don't speak Russian so well, don't speak much outside! When I go out, I try to
2412. speak little Latvian that I know, yeah, first and if I get somewhere and I can't continue, than I
2413. speak English. So if I see the person can't understand English, than I speak Russian, maybe.
2414. V.: I'm only here for 5 months – there's no point in learning Latvian very much, because it's
2415. only 5 months and after that you will forget, because you'll probably never use it again.
2416. J.: But you can write letters in Latvian!
2417. R.: Of course!
2418. J. Yeah, I 'm here for longer time and I'll try to learn it. After this degree won't you come
2419. back?
2420. R.: Yeah, sure!
2421. V.: I've learned how to cook. I've lived with the Spanish and they've teached me how to
2422. cook!
2423. R.: I've learned how to cope on my own – surviving in a different environment!
2424. V.: Of course, because I've lived, I've met other people from other cultures, other people
2425. and I've learned something from everybody. Some small things, like how to cook and
2426. interact with the Spanish //

J.: // so when he goes home, he will cook like the Spanish (laughs)//
V.:// and improvement in English with speaking and I learned Latvian language and some
words from every language.
J: the same for me! And met lots of people from other countries.
R.: that's true! I agree.
J.: Graduate, so I have changed my identity, because before I wasn't a graduate, so I changed
my identity one step further and hope.
R..: I realize that I'm not a Latvian, but I wonder all the time about who I am.
J.: but she's stopped crying! You've stopped crying, right?
R.: Yeah, I've stopped crying but last week something happened to me and I've said that I
am said and depressed, because I have so many responsibilities about myself and my
studies, I've to do so many projects, I have to start, so it's…
J.: When you have many things to do you forget about your things, you concentrate and you
just work on your things.
V.: I feel that I'm Hungarian but also some sort of an alien here in Latvia. It's a strange land-
people going around in big jackets.
J.: I wanted to grab any language I could grab, the more, the better. Every language that
comes my way, I grab it while I can and than I just speak. After five years I really need to
improve my English.
R.: Really?
J.: yeah! I can't speak like the way I used to before, because after 5 years, I didn't speak to
people, so only a couple of lectures.
R.: English, Russian, Latvian. But Russian I have a private teacher and it's my own interest,
not at the university!
V.: Just Latvian and English.
J.: He gets his Spanish for free!
Everyone laughs
J.: I have English and Latvian classes.
R.: now I can use basic daily Russian when I go around town. I have improved – of course
because I didn't speak Russian at all when I arrived. I followed courses and private teacher.
V.: I've improved my English a lot when I speak to other Erasmus students we speak English
all the time! It helped me a lot!
J.: I've improved and still improving Russian, English and Latvian.
J.: English – the most
R.: Yeah
V.: Yeah
R.: Latvian

J.: Russian, the least, because we speak Latvian during classes.
R.: No, I don't use Latvian outside, I usually prefer some Russian words, yes.
J.: So, how often do you speak Russian outside?
R.: No, not often only in shops, not with people. I don't know why but I don't like Latvian
language I couldn't s… I was late for the class today, so that I didn't have to attend it – I can't
use it!
V.: I can't say I can use it!
V.: I understand Latvians a little bit when they speak//
R.: //Yeah, I understand Latvians when they speak, but mostly we switch to English. But
mostly, on the bus or in the shops if the people don't speak English it can be very difficult to
understand them and be understood by them. I usually show what I want, or…//
V.://use a piece of paper and draw it.
R.: Or I say "spasibo" in Russian.
R.: In Turkey you get your meal in a restaurant very quickly, here you have to wait very long
nobody apologizes for that… or people are rude and push, jump the queue…
V.: yes, yes! I like the Spanish now more than Hungarians, they are more cheerful, warm and
optimistic. Hungarians are not like that
R.: or for example when you are crossing from side to side, you have to wait for the light –
sometimes there are no cars – then why wait – I just cross. For me it's also strange that at
the restaurants you're not allowed to smoke, I think there are just many differences
between the cultures.
J.: In my country in some restaurants, yeah, you can't smoke, in some places, not
everywhere, but I think it's not good…
R.: people are very busy and tensed. In turkey everyone is more relaxed – no rushing so
much. People in Turkey are more polite. Here they are so rude with you, like in shops and on
public transport!
V.: Yeah, I see Hungarians differently now, I compare them with the other cultures that I met
and I see so many differences between the way we do things and the way Latvians do or the
Spanish. I think it's because we come from different cultures.
J.: I compare Latvians and Ukrainians and to be honest I don't see so many differences, only
maybe that Ukrainians are warmer and friendlier and more willing to talk to you than
Latvians are, but I don't know, I can't really say yet…

Ul.

2497. If I've been somewhere else? Yeah, sure. I've travelled to different countries like Spain, Italy,
2498. France, Germany, of course, England. And I've been studying in Germany for 5 years now.
2499. And living… Yeah, previously I travelled with my family or with my friends… and these were
2500. mostly exploration kind of trips… I went to Bonn when I was 16, and I fell in love with the
2501. City and then I found out that studying in Germany at that point was less expensive than
2502. studying in Austria. And so I went to Germany. I think that the travelling didn't influence me
2503. much but… err… I think the travelling didn't influence me much because it was only for very
2504. short period of time. But having lived in Bonn for five years, I'm used to being a foreigner in
2505. another country and I've to go the foreign department in Bonn and I have to do things with
2506. my embassy in Bonn, so I'm used to certain procedures… yes… err being able to get to know
2507. new people, new cultures, new languages… gaining knowledge. Because I wanted to be able
2508. to improve my Latvian, I wanted to see how the studying in another country work and I
2509. wanted to see how the lifestyle in Latvia is, how people live, how students live…
2510. Oh, I've already learned some Latvian before and the English speaking countries were too
2511. expensive. Err…I've been here last year… but before I ever came to Latvia it was a post-
2512. Soviet image… a rather depressing… and people living in very small places… but the first time
2513. I came over here I was really amazed by the big variety of nature that you have here. You
2514. can do so much if it's not so dark. In summer time you can do so many things in this country
2515. it's amazing! So that's cool! But I came here before just for 10 days and I wanted to get away
2516. from Bonn and because my parents wanted to see where I was going to spend one
2517. semester. Because I needed to get some material to learn Latvian in a better way and you
2518. cannot get anything in Germany unless you pay around 100 euros for a dictionary.
2519. the first time we were here we lived in *Mezaparks*, so of course it changed dramatically. So
2520. we didn't see any poorer parts and people were very very friendly to us. So, the image that I
2521. had before coming to Latvia before changed a lot having come the second time. Now we live

in *Maskavas forstadte* and there is violence and there is drug abuse and there is so much
you don't like to see and there is poverty on every single corner… but it's good to see it
because you get a very different image of your own country and you start to appreciate
what you have. Yeah but it's nice because I thought I couldn't live in a part where there is so
much violence… but nothing ever happened to me. People are maybe not so friendly… but I
guess people are not so friendly in this area in general…During the day I feel safe but during
the night not so much… but I guess the drunk people don't harm you I guess it's the people
who are on drugs who could harm you more, because the drunk people are too slowly.
It's someone who struggles with the language, someone who's to take their passport with
them all the time… yeah maybe just struggling with the language and carrying a passport
around. Yeah, because it's the same in Germany but err… but the difference is that I speak
German German, so nobody notices where I'm from, nobody wants to control anything. Like
are you allowed to stay in this country? But here it could happen! It's a dormitory. It's a
students' dormitory with shared rooms and one kitchen and one bathroom per floor. It's all
students on the second floor it's only foreigners, so exchange students and on the 3rd, 4th
and 5th floor it's Russians and Latvians. There're 2 dormitories where you can go right now:
it's Prima and Raznas and I'm living in Raznas right now which is a cheaper one and a better
one. I've lived in both. I've asked people at the admin… administration and they said that we
will be stolen our laptops from our rooms… but I don't think that would happen. But it would
be better if we could share the rooms with the Latvians or Russians, no matter…depending
on which language you want to learn. Because I've been here for a while and I'm still far
away from being fluent! No. I don't know. I couldn't afford joining a sports club… it's quite
expensive… Oh, but I don't have a student card, because I'm a "klausitajs", and not a
student! I take the exams just for me, to see…They are….My credit points for studying here
are not counted at my home university, because the niveau of the German courses that I

take here is really really low, compared to the niveau of my classes back home. For Masters
course, just to get the credit points, I would have to write an essay, about 2 or 3 pages…
Yeah, I know, right! And in Bonn, I've got to write term papers of 30 pages.
I try to read one article a day from "Diena" every single day because it takes longer for me,
because I want to know what happens, and I read "The Baltic Times" online. We don't have
TV, but there is watch charts : tv.lv and there you can watch things and I try to watch "Kas
notiek Latvija?" err but I don't follow the whole thing, because it's too long and there's
difficult vocabulary and… what else?... I also listen to the radio SWH. What else?.. I've been
to the "Coca Cola Plaza" upstairs and I've been to watch several Hollywood movies and I saw
" Janu nakts" it's an Austrian-Latvian co-production. Yeah , it is. It is really really funny. It's
full of prejudices, international kind of views, prejudices about Latvia. Oh, oh, and I went to
"kino Riga" to see "Rigas Sargi" – it's about Lacplesu diena. It's really really good – everyone
should see it. It's a very very good movie, very emotional – even I had a weep afterwards –
it's really good. Small nations are always more patriotic than big nations. Yeah… Austrians
are more patriotic than Germans! About Austria? Ehm… in a different way more patriotic,
yes. I follow what happens in Austria more than I used to, I care about voting, about the
elections err… I try to take part even though it's more difficult. I have to write a letter to the
Austrian embassy, everything is more complicated, but it's important and yeah… you know
it's cooler to say no, I'm not German, I'm Austrian… somehow…Oh, and you know - we are 7
Erasmus students from Austria here and we were invited to the Austrian ambassador for a
Christmas party. Yeah! It never happened in Germany!(laughs) It's really nice that they did
such thing! Oh, no so many. I have the feeling the Latvian girls on my course prefer to be
among themselves and I guess some struggle with the German language. Some of them are
not so good. And they probably don't think that I speak Latvian at all, we don't speak so
much. They are in a group. I can't approach them so easily. In Germany it's not so closed.

2572. Students are not as closed as they seem here, because we've big variety of courses and
2573. we choose different courses where we meet different people. But I've met one girl, but she
2574. is in Germany but she was here until mid-October. We're in contact. She speaks Russian. But
2575. since she's in Germany… I am even in contact with her now via e-mail. It's really really good!
2576. And Olga, this girl, she is going to stay at my parents' place over Christmas. Yeah, and we
2577. will meet over Christmas, but I'll be back after Christmas. Yeah, I will stay here until the 30th
2578. of January and then I'm gonna go on the train and the train is gonna crash because it's
2579. gonna be full of tears - I don't wonna go! Yeah, I don't mind leaving the university courses,
2580. because they are pretty bad over here, compared to Germany and the level is so low… but I
2581. like life here. Yeah, it's more like there is time for anything… people are more relaxed…I'm
2582. sorry… I thought that people say that Riga was the busiest town in the whole Baltic states ?!
2583. I still walk faster than the average Latvian (laughs) - they walk slowlier! And the car drivers
2584. are so crazy! driving in Latvia is so dangerous! I'm happy I don't have a driving license,
2585. because no one is going to ask me to drive! Oh, there is this one Latvian guy at our
2586. dormitory. He doesn't live there, but he is just sometimes there and nobody knows why but
2587. everyone knows him. I've met one lady where we lived in Mezaparks last year and she owns
2588. the Bed and Breakfast. And we kept in contact and we are still in contact now and my
2589. Latvian teacher lives in Mazsalaca now. He doesn't teach here, he is my Latvian teacher from
2590. Bonn. He's retired and now lives in Mazsalaca. Oh, no! I was here in summer and I called him
2591. like 5 times and he promised I'll call you back when I am in Riga, but it never happened.
2592. I guess, in the dormitory, other exchange students are in the same situation, we are like
2593. family maybe. Everyone helps everyone else. If anyone is unhappy, than the other is there
2594. and tries to comfort him or her. And if anyone has problems, than…we are 4-5 people who
2595. are in upper-intermediate (Latvian) class… and if anyone needs to go to the doctor's, then
2596. it's always us who always goes there, in case, in case the doctors don't speak English. It can

happen. It happened to me and to others. And with Latvians… it's quite difficult… and I'm
not here for a long time… and it seems like they rather want to be among themselves in
their groups… but that's ok – maybe that's the mentality, I don't know? Some are easier to
approach than others, because it's matter of character… but I would say among friends –
maybe Olga, the one who is in Germany now, maybe acquaintances… but not more…
maybe 5 or 6… somebody I'm going to keep in touch. There is one local girl here, Olga. Britta
I knew her before... and then there is one Russian and one Latvian and the rest is
foreigners… Living in the dormitory has helped, quite a lot. Because you just see each other
in the corridor, or you just share a room or you just start to talk – so that helps and of course
the university, the university courses help. But for some it's maybe more difficult than for
others, like on the Baltic studies – they don't see any Latvians at the university, so they don't
have any contact with them – only other Erasmus exchange students. It was difficult to see
that the houses are ran down and people still living in there and it's hard to imagine that
people get drunk at 9 am - that's a big shock, it's poverty, like Raznas iela, for example – it's
really different from the old city… but I had flees, lice, I had rabies… the doctor said that I got
it on 15th trolleybus … yeah… you have an animal and it lives under your skin and from any
skin contact you can get it. and even if you wash your hands afterwards… what I did – you
have to put this medicine all over you self and then I had different cream and drugs.
I guess it's just the courses that I took, because I talked to others and they said that their
course are better, but I had a feeling that either the students don't know enough language,
or maybe because the students don't learn. For instance during the literature course we had
to read something and they just don't read it… they just there, they get to class but they
don't read it. I wouldn't even go to class…. But hey – they do! And now I have a feeling that
if you study foreign languages – I don't know what's it like for English, but for the German –
they don't have conversation courses, they don't have language courses at the university

2622. and they would really need it in order to practice all the time, because they can't speak so
2623. much! They should have more conversational courses! Oh, the weather … it's so dark most
2624. of the time and there is no sunshine… and and the buses here are so crowded – it's
2625. incredible. In Germany or in Austria, they would say, the bus is full! And don't get on
2626. because the bus is just too full… and here – it's the Old buses made in Czechoslovakia, they
2627. are really old and they are stuffed with people and there are always more people getting on
2628. and they still go – it's crazy! Trolleybuses 15 run every 6 minutes, but sometimes they are
2629. late, like 10 minutes and then 2 of them come at once. I felt a bit lost when I arrived,
2630. because I didn't speak so much Latvian and I couldn't understand Russian at all and in
2631. Maskavas forschtate people mainly speak Russian and eh... otherwise I didn't have any
2632. other problems... Yeah it just took me three or four days and then I got whatever I wanted.
2633. I don't feel integrated here really, because of language and stuff but it comes with time. but
2634. after a few days I felt better because on the second day I could order breakfast, on the third
2635. day I could ask for the way, on the third day I could ask for the bus ticket... I feel like a
2636. resident. Like I'm here permanently. That all kind of problems can be solved and that you
2637. don't need money to be happy and enjoy life, you don't need a car to be happy, you don't
2638. need to go on holidays to be happy, you don't need a big house to be happy...you just need
2639. enough food at home, clothes to wear and friends – social and a job! No, of course not! I
2640. don't speak Latvian so… I've been working through my reading list for the university in Bonn
2641. because when I come back, I'll have my Master's examinations. Yes, I have changed… yes,
2642. everybody changes… I guess now I'm more laid back, more relaxed… err I think now I don't
2643. get shocked anymore when I see drug abuse or alcohol abuse, I have seen it err… it happens
2644. in Germany … mmmm I don't know I guess I have changed… and I can drink more vodka
2645. now! Yeah, most of the students who come here don't speak any Latvian at all…
2646. mmm, yes, I have changed as well when I went to Bonn. I had to arrange things and I had to

go to different places… err… and everything had to be done three times more often than other students had to and back then I was just… like nineteen and just came from the high school…. And, of course that's the biggest change! I guess now it's not such a big change, but I don't know if I hadn't changed here is because I really like it here the… the… Latvian kind of way, it's all laid back, it's all kind of "it's gonna happen! and "we're gonna improvise!" and and…. oh, just in err everyday experience – watching to people, talking to people… it's like "good things happen anyway, bad things happen anyway too, so we just have to take it as it comes!". I think that's your point of view… I think people in countries like Germany and Austria, Austria is almost like Germany, in general. But I think people in Germany are… are not being able to relax, they… they are always stressed out, and everything has to be on time and you have to be on time, and everything is like, like this, you know?! Like everything is in a system and here there is no big system, and it's just… things just happen and it's good! Yeah, it's good! Before I always felt that like I am Austrian… but I don't know… Now Germany is my home but I am still Austrian. This is where my roots and this is where my body is and stuff… and in Germany I have just developed more and in a dif… in a different way than I would have developed in Austria. And err I still do feel like an Austrian! No, no it hasn't changed! But all the Germans here, just like in Germany see me as a German. My pronunciation is the same as theirs! maybe not so much. Maybe not so much who I am…? Maybe little things about me have changed but not the whole of my identity… It would have been scary! should be scary! I wasn't planning to improve my English, because I think it's good enough to speak to people, so I think it should be (should be) enough! I wish I could speak Latvian like this! I just wanted to learn Latvian, so that I could have contacts with Latvians, I wanted to speak more, I wanted to be fluent! I won't be able to get that now but… who knows?! Oh, no, not so much! Yeah, yes, that's the only place! It's twice a week and I have joined this course in September. Err… we (we) read, so we get different pieces of

paper with stories of Regina Ezera, so we read and then we have to discuss it… So that's not
so much learning grammar anymore. We need grammar, but the main focus is err is
speaking, because we need to be able to speak, to speak about different things, so… we
have to be able to hold a conversation. Oh, yes, we do, we have social subjects with alcohol,
drugs, violence, we had movies, err, we had a bit of literature and err… music. The most
important thing is just talking! Erm, with English, not much progress, it's the same as it was
before! With Latvian, I've told you, when I got here, I could read, I could write, I had a good
level, but I couldn't speak. When I had to introduce myself, I was so nervous, I made every
single grammar mistake you could only imagine… yes because I was nervous… I never had to
speak in my class; I only just had to read, to read out loudly and to make sentences. We
never spoke in Latvian, we always spoke in German so erhm… Now I still miss a lot of
vocabulary and it takes a lot of time and more effort now, but I can speak more freely and
I'm less nervous to talk, but not in class, in general outside the class. Yeah, but they are just
the swear words no (no) but I knew some essential stuff like how to introduce yourself, how
to say hello, thank you, please and goodbye. Unfortunately, I use English and German the
most and Latvian the least, because most of the Erasmus students don't speak so much
Latvian. But we try, once we are in the advanced class than we just say: *"Nu, ja, tagad*
runasim latviski!" and then we just say… and then it's just a rule to say everything in Latvian!
Err ehm, I want to speak Latvian to everybody I need to speak to, at least the first sentence!
Different situations, mostly outside the university, because here we only have this one class
and there we already speak Latvian anyway already. Doctors I managed pharmacies I
managed and bus(and)… errr… and stuff… so just err more. More and everyday use and on
daily basis. I would like to speak Latvian to more people. Err… Yes, with the staff at our, at
our dormitory, because they only speak Russian and Latvian and sometimes I cannot explain
to them exactly what exactly I want. And if it's a Russian " babushka", the security ladies

and they only speak Russian and when I ask her for like the key for the washing machine
room and then they start laughing at me and they are like :"*Hehehe, why don't you speak*
Russian, you are in Latvia?!" and I am like "*Hehehe, why don't you speak Latvian, you are in*
Latvia?!" Yeah, they just start laughing and they are like *why do you even bother to learn*
that language? I think they just don't want to speak it and they just don't see why people
want to learn it! And why people don't want to learn Russian instead. No, I don't have
problems understanding overall. Yeah, it's making myself understood! Because I understand
the vocabulary from hearing them, but if I had to speak, then I can't… I avoid speaking
Latvian to a German professor at the at this faculty, because he says, he always says that you
have to stress everything on the first syllable and I am like: "*Oh, yeah, I've had Latvian for a*
while now, I know!" and he is like: "*Oh yeah? Then, you can speak to me* and then the first
mistake I make it was like: "WRONG!" and he studied pedagogics… Yeah, and and I guess he
failed! (laughs!) and he always makes me nervous because he always asks me these like
weird questions, like I've got this year book, tell me , Ulrieke, what picture did I see and I'm
like: "Yeah…This book is so big, you know, and how many pictures there are and haven't
seen any of them yet, so how should I know what's in it… It freaks me out! Mmm… maybe
mostly Latvian traditions and … mmm…. mostly Latvian history…. Because it was "Lacplesa
diena", it was the Day of Independence and… so there was quite a lot we've had! erm… just
by experiencing… so… you know that there is something going on, erm…so you go there, you
watch it and there you have a direct experience! Oh, we spoke about Jani and the Singing
and dancing festival that we talked about in our Latvian course! Yeah… that's 'cause I think
Austrians and Latvians are not SO far from each other! Yes, we have different history… but in
in Latvia you get that feeling that if you talk to people you may get to your aim faster than
just by following the procedures and that's the same in Austria. And people are more laid
back here and people are more laid back in Austria… so… people seem more alike to me…

2722. err… so.. In Germany it’s less fun! You’ve to follow the plan strictly, or otherwise you are out
2723. of the group! Otherwise people will complain! Mmm… no, my perception did not really
2724. change… no…But I look at people back in Germany… I look at my friends differently now…
2725. err in fact when you don’t have so much contact now, you see who your real friends are…
2726. and stuff like this…Yeah, yeah… living with less fortune, less status symbols makes you feel
2727. good… yeah, just living here… could only bring like 20 kilos of luggage but I brought 50! I had
2728. my parents with me But I guess you just don’t have the things you are used to and you start
2729. to improvise and improvising works in this country better than in other countries. One
2730. word? I’m grateful! I’m grateful to have this experience, I’m grateful to… to see how things
2731. can go differently, how how… people can be alike, like Austrians and Latvians! I’m grateful
2732. that I, that I saw poverty, that I had like all these diseases…. If I should be luck enough one
2733. day maybe get a job over here… exactly I don’t know what… may be may be something…
2734. company or something, than I would already feel prepared… I really want to come here…
2735. but I have a certain status… you know and of course it can go a little below but I’m used to
2736. certain things… and I would need to earn enough money to keep that status and not worry
2737. about money all the time… so… so if if…that would be the case, than yes, please!

Appendix 6: Notes on recurrent themes in the interviews

Self and Erasmus	Self and Locals	Self and Compatriots
Rite of passage- adaptation and socialisation into Erasmus community 56-57 Getting used to the environment : different stages of the stay (from homesickness/loneliness to feeling comfortable abroad/ establishing friendships with others; establishing familiar routines) 80-86; 272-281; getting to understand one's bearings 1685-1687 Initial shock at arrival: internal monologue for comfort	**Weak connections/ties with Erasmus** Looking for reasons for lack of contact with the locals 26-28 Seeking for explanation why locals are not interested in making connection with the exchange students like Erasmus 1157-1159 Hard to meet the locals – you have to make a real effort to encounter and establish a connection with them (example of ventriloquating of the	
	Local students tend to be portrayed as reserved/ closed group 918-926	
It's a different question for me then for others/most, because…. Individual differences/ contrasts 192-193 Because of my Eastern European background, it's not a shock for me to be in a		

Social and cognitive adaptation: from not knowing to knowing people and things around 565-571 orientation in the

Weak connection with the local community 1140-1147; living in the dormitory you learn more Spanish and Italian then the local language 1148-1149

Erasmus marginalisation from the locals (i.e., accommodation) 52-53; segregation/ gate-keeping vs. strive to meet the locals 1696-1701

The way Erasmus people are perceived in Germany – comparison and presupposition of the way Latvians may perceive Erasmus students – making assumptions about the Latvians' behavioural characteristics and "mentality" –

Erasmus people it's very easy to join the **Erasmus circle** – openness to contacts from outside – including the locals – nevertheless unwillingness and reluctance on behalf of the locals to join Erasmus community; suggested reason – use of language (e.g., lingua franca English) 1980-1987

country like Latvia 838-840; Because I speak the local language/ know some locals/ celebrating Christmas in Latvia 1302-1305 learning Latvian because of similarity to L1 1715-1716 it's not a question for me but for others who are not trying to get in touch with Latvians 1795-1797	**Attitude of the locals towards Erasmus students/foreigners** Locals show some xenophobic behaviour to people speaking English/ foreigners – encounter at the club; experience with services as opposed to the friendly and nice local students at the university 2029-2039 speaker's perception by the locals (negative view) 326-329; Locals: Latvians and Russians - who is foreign? 471-474 With Latvians it's quite difficult and I'm not here for a long time… and it seems that they want to be among themselves in their groups…. But that's ok maybe it's their mentality… some are easier to approach than	
Conflict between Erasmus portrayed as *in-group* vs. Locals seen as *out-group* 59-66		
Erasmus students' image of Latvians vs speaker's image/ understanding of the locals and their characteristics 292-312		
Becoming ambassadors of your own country/ Erasmus as an intercultural experience; representative for others: attracting interest of others to it by introducing / forming images of a country/ nation by observing the Erasmus students from that country; demonstrating by examples of own behaviour and cultural elements occurring in daily life 683-686; 1039-1044; 1047-1052; 1364- 1367 National belonging/ identity: contexts/ interlocutors determine	**Change of perspective/ stance and viewing others and self differently** Initial and subsequent impression about the locals (from positive idealistic to a more critical/ negative view) 199-205 Locals are friendly when you get to know them 1294-1295 **The Latvian language**	

identity preferences (seen as a role that can be discarded) 103-115 **Words of wisdom**: when you are at home people seem to be different from when you actually meet them (e.g., as you get to meet the individuals, these countries don't seem so remote any longer) 691 – 696 all kind of problems can be solved and you don't need money to be happy and enjoy life, you don't need a car to be happy, you don't need to go on holiday or to have a big house…. You just need enough *food, clothes to wear and friends* 2630-2633 – going back to basics?! living with less fortune, less status symbol makes you feel good 2720-2721	Speaking language (e.g. Latvian) and role-playing a Latvian 369-378 Following Latvian language courses and attempting at communicating with the locals – provoking respect and gaining positive attitude from the locals for making effort 1738-1740 Latvians vs. Russians internal conflict and observed generalisations re. differences 860-863 The dorm ladies don't have a good relation with other but I speak Latvian or Russian to them and they open up their mind 1462 – 1465 **Familiarity with the locals** Ecuadorians sound a bit like Latvians – showing familiarity with the locals by ventriloquating their reactions (see as an example of direct reported speech – enacted dialogue between speaker and locals) 1551-1554 Being a foreigner isn't the issue of language, but following some observable behaviour of the locals (e.g., food, newspapers) I eat what they eat, I read what they read…883-886; conflict situation with the locals at the dorm 1386-1391; **Stereotyping the locals** I like the Russian people but the Russian people from my dorm I can't stand – they are terrible 1392-1393	

Differences between self and students in the home country (criticised) as opposed to Erasmus students (praised): small-mindedness as opposed to broad-mindedness and openness in the outlook, taking interest, caring, wishing to learn – curiosity 1056-1071; 1073-1076

Fitting and not fitting the stereotypes: I'm a quiet person but those Spanish people and their fiesta is not for me… 727-730;1206-1207 I've learned a lot about other countries – how things are there: food/ music/films, etc.2136-2139 auto- and hetero-stereotypes: what other people thought of Polish people and the stereotypes that they had of the Poles (mostly negative: stealing and damaging things): however the speaker contradicts – that although you can confirm these stereotypes (which makes her feel ashamed) about Poles – in reality there is a lot of variation between people 2139
Discussing stereotypes and their truthfulness among Erasmus students – falling into the trap of interculturalism – ***confirming or refuting the existing stereotypes and constructing the new ones – contradicting themselves*** but at the same time affirming that stereotypes are only partially true, as individuals are so different 2263-2286

- **Language choice and belonging** (switching languages – switching allegiances); 523-529; Also speaking a foreign language/ *lingua franca* 559-560; 961; 964-966; 1240-1245; 1249-1258-1262 (sense of being *cosmopolitan* (above and beyond the national categorisation/ while also not being perceived as one

thought Latvians were so cold and they don't try to open up their mind 1402-1405Latvians are a bit shy…1440-1444

Home vs. Host country: different norms of behaviour

Comparison between home and host countries: where life is better; what the speaker likes/dislikes about what's going on in each 145-150; 846-854

Rude and impolite people observed on the streets and public transport as host country 72-79; 582-588

Locals hard-working, responsible, as opposed to the light-hearted and less responsible compatriots 396 - 402

Attitudes to politics Latvia vs. Hungary 869-880

Mentality: Latvian vs. Germans (e.g., queuing) 1297-1300; later continued in 1334-1338 (contradiction with regard to the locals

Comparing general characteristics of Latvians and Italians (auto and hetero-stereotyping): remaining more critical/ negative towards compatriots (Italians) 745-750

Here, people are very tensed and very busy. In Turkey, everyone is more relaxed – no rushing so much. People in Turkey are more polite. Here they are so rude with you, like in the shops and on public transport; 2482-2484
Ukrainians are warmer and friendlier and more willing to talk

Latvians / Austrians/ Germans comparison 2711-2717

I think people in countries such as Germany and Austria are very stressed, unable to relax and everything has to be on time, etc., and in Latvia there is no big system – it's just things

Local students vs. home students: attitude to studying, to sessions, preparation, homework, etc. 2611-1616

of the locals, thus classified as a *foreigner* because of speaking English) Language proficiency allows for privileged status in the host country (if you speak Russian or Latvian) 18-20; 41-143; behaviour is connected with language (in English I behave differently) – more freedom in English (ELF – international lingua franca!) many things in English I wouldn't be able to say in Czech – they would sound weird. Thanks to English it's so easy and everyone speaks it so well. 1779-1784 *linguistic isolation* when co-nationals speak their L1 that is not understandable to speakers of other languages (sense of inclusion/ exclusion) 1447-1450 **European village** – both unity internal yet marginalised on the outside in relation to the host country 1133-1137 That's an amazing thing to meet so many different nations in one place, so I'm a very European person, or I'm not very Czech, I feel more like a European I would say 1804-1807 What does being European mean to me – thanks to my family (with all different origins) I'm not always proud of my country (criticism)	The Latvian girls on my course prefer to be among themselves. Some of them struggle with their German. They are in a group. I can't approach them so easily. In Germany it's not so closed as it is here (in Latvia) 2562-2567 Latvia is seen as an exotic location – unexplored, little known – the language that is not much represented – there is a sense among the students that they are doing something extraordinary, rather than going to a popular destination, like Spain, Italy, France, etc. (Ch, Ja, Jo, Ar.)	651 I take lots of photos of places and my new friends and share them on social networks with my friends – it's important for me for them to know where I am and what my life is like – a lot of my friends are sedentary (to boast and impress them? to keep in touch – reassure themselves in friends' interest and support) 1828-1839 Friendships at home are being put to test/ exchange students are made to feel more important due to their absence from home country (examples of direct reported speech) 707-710; 758-760 Friends perception of speaker's change and speaking English (direct rep. speech) 711-722 Self and friends back home who are sedentary differences emerge 1129-1132 Taking photos to show friends via Facebook or Skype what my life is like but also to relish their comments (good examples of direct reported speech) 1477 – 1485 My friends think that I'm a bit crazy because of going on the exchange to unpopular little known country 1943-1947 Looking back at friends at home – who your real friends are 2718-2719 **National auto-stereotypes**

I'm a big supporter of the European Union, even though it has its bad things but it's a huge and very successful project. I'd like to see my future connected with the EU 1812-1823 **Personal development/change** as the result of Erasmus experience and interaction with students from different countries – *makes you more comfortable in the world* 1271-1279 self-assured, self-sufficient, independent 1360-1362; Personal change 96-101; 971; My Latvian part of me has come alive 513-517 more confident and more brave 1493 *Riga is my home now: I'm used to people here, etc.*1728-1732; gaining independence, as for the first time in my life I'm taking care of myself…1733-1736 By being abroad and on your own you get a better understanding of yourself 1125-1127 it's new part of my life, very important part, where I'm becoming independent, speak foreign languages; capable to take care of myself 1798-1799 independence and confidence from living abroad independently 2108 – 2113 I can't say that I'm not Now I have become more open to new experiences, to new things and new people than previously 2234-2235 Now, I'm more laid back, more relaxed … I don't get shocked anymore when I see drug abuse or alcohol and I		Poles are xenophilic – friendly towards someone who is English speaking 2040-2044 **Heightened sense of patriotism (981-988)** Austrians are more patriotic than Germans… Since I've been away I've become more patriotic about Austria. It's cooler to say that I'm Austrian and not German 2554 - 2559

can drink more vodka…2635-2638 I haven't changed here that much because I like it here, the Latvian kind of way: we are going to improvise… voicing locals 2644-2648 I'm a little bit more serious now because I've met people who live in much worse conditions than we do in Germany. Change in attitude towards compatriots due to Erasmus experience and observing different life conditions in the host country. Having become more critical of the co-nationals and the "seriousness of the problems that they consider that they have" – having gained the distance- forming a different –distant opinion on the compatriots 1994-2004 **National identity and multiple identities** Polish anymore – it's **who I'm inside always** but it's more like the **international side of me has changed:** from national to international identification (awareness of multiple identities co-existing in one and the same individual; also stable and changeable nature of identity) 2113-2116 I never felt like being only from Poland, with the Polish identity – I always was searching for my own place		

in the world… there is always this place somewhere else in the world… there is a more international identity in me rather than just Polish – shows the contextual nature of identity: place-bound (geographical), affective, internal, psychological, emotional, social – became more prominent while away from home 2235 -2243 Reflection on (national) identity, language (accent), belonging and definition, effect of other's perception of self and self-identification 2653 - 2660 **Travel bug** I like to travel by myself 1394-1400; it's easy for me to travel alone – I don't like to take care of other people 1487 – 1492; we want to go… list of places and challenge to get there 1841-1846 rented a car and went on a trip around Latvia and Estonia 1876-1878 Afraid of coming back to Poland because for me this time is special time. Later I want to travel for work, for fun – to visit friends from Erasmus and the friends who are on Erasmus from Poland – I have lots of possibilities and now I know that I'm able to do it. ***The world is my oyster –attitude*** 2243-2248 **Criticism of Erasmus community:** Always come in late, don't hand in their homework 1450-1454		

Criticism of Erasmus programme setup: *I don't get Erasmus being Erasmus living with a Czech guy* 1703-1704 *Of course, I like Erasmus, but since I'm here I want to meet as many Latvians as possible* 1766-1767 Sharing a room with a compatriot 2047-2049 I came here to get to know some Latvians, but on my floor there are no Latvians and instead a lot of Italians, so I could rather learn Italian as I hear it all the time 1872-1874 **Disappointment with the programme/ disillusioned** I'm feeling very foreign, not really fitting in – because of the lack of contact here (implying locals) 1904-1906 **Party animals vs. loners** Erasmus students go out together but I'm not this kind of person so I refuse 1459-1462 It's different than I thought it would be… I'd like to get to know more people, more of the country and it's more normal than how I thought before – it would be if I liked all the parties but these aren't the things I like to do 1882-1889 *Staying the same as at home or behaving differently* while on Erasmus (*partying* and *drinking*, being noisy and behaving in the way you		

wouldn't normally do at home) 652-664 Conscious choice of moving out of the dormitory – away from all the partying and distractions also in order to make contact with the locals 1169-1173 *As I'm still young, I like to go out* 1726 I hope that such parties won't continue all my life… but it's very easy to hang out with them (other Erasmus students) 1791-1792 Erasmus as having fun 623-624 it would be if I liked all the parties but these aren't the things I like to do 1882-1889 **Friendships** Friendships among the Erasmus students 1344-1345, 1351 Choosing friends among Erasmus based on similarities 1206-1210 Exchange students are so nice and kind 1431-1432 Personal qualities making it easier to befriend others : openness and optimism 1437-1439 Developing independence/openness by meeting new people; without family/ friends sense of enforced new contacts 550-555; 794-796; 954-958 Friendship based on shared experiences and living abroad being in similar circumstances, facing similar challenges 2070-2076		

I feel more comfortable with Erasmus students, because we live together, we spend so much time together – we really know each other very well… 2208-2213 I don't know that in such a short time I could meet so many people and know them very well 2233-2234 We are like **family** making friends is so easy here everyone else helps everyone else. If anyone is unhappy then the other one tries to comfort him/her 2586-2591 Living in the halls, sharing accommodation and lifestyle 2598-2601 Regularly having to introduce yourself as no one knows who you are – becomes annoying and boring as it is so repetitive especially at the beginning; more profound talks follow if there emerges interest at the initial introductory phase 675 – 682 I get really tired of telling who I am and what I am doing here – but it's just a part of it because they have to do the same and it's important… 1787-1790 It is always easy to join the Erasmus circle – we have something in common and alcohol always helps – I shouldn't say that, ha?! 1790-1791 I have already made *pretty strong relationships* here, so		If I met with my friends, we would talk totally differently (because of the language that you speak, has an effect on your behaviour and perception of self) 1779

I wish to be in touch with the people from here 1786-1787 **Finding points of connection/ similarities** with others (other Erasmus): *with the Polish girls we try to speak our languages, even though they (the two languages) are very different. My grandfather was Polish, I come from close to Poland and I like Poles and Poland* 1750-1754 Making new friends is so easy here, because when you meet an Erasmus you always have something in common – you are foreigners – so it's very easy at a party just to start talking to someone else 1773-1775 **Similar or different**: voicing Erasmus community –direct reported speech 572-575 I think you're always reflecting on others and yourself, your experiences – it's hard to bring it all to one point. It's like just you're experiencing or recognising new things and what's different in other cultures and you compare it to what's it like at home…1933-1936 Representatives of many different countries in Europe – engage in comparison: similarities and difference according to their perceptions between their home countries and the host		

country (language, family life) 1947-1958 **Having to make adjustments to one's behaviour/speech** to adjust to the new surroundings: My *humour* is very sarcastic and it's very hard to implement it so early, because not many people are used to that and I don't know these people so much 1777-1778		

Appendix 7: Interviewees' pseudonym abbreviations

Pseudonym of the interviewee	Pseudonym abbreviations
Alfonso	Alf
Alisa	Al
Anna	An
Ardi	Ard
Britta	Br
Chie	Ch
Gerald	G
Jan	J
Johannes	Jo
Kasia	Ka
Katarzyna	Kat
Kristina	Kri
Lissi	L
Nick	N
Ulrieke	Ul

Appendix 8: Matrix of Topics (interviews)

MATRIX OF TOPICS

The discourses of identification: self and other

Self and Erasmus	Self and Locals	Self and Compatriots
(A) Journey into Erasmus community: adaptation/socialisation 1. initial shock of entry (N 3) (L 596-599; An 943-947; Ge 1685;) 2. from strangeness to familiarisation with the environment (N 4) (L 565-570; Ar 1110-1124; Ge 1686-1687; Ka 2093-2099) 3. from homesickness/loneliness to establishing friendships (N 7) (Al 56-61; 82-86; Kr 272-278; Ka 2093-2094; Br 1343-1346; Ch 1431-1432;1437-1439; J 1786-1787; Kat 2208-2213;2233-2234) 4. Erasmus togetherness (N 7) (L 675-682; J 1787-1790; 1980-1987; Kat 2208-2213; U 2586-259; Al 794-796; An 954-958; Ka 2072-2076;) 5. establishing *imagined communities* (N 4) (L 572-575; Ard 1204-1208; J 1750-1754; Jo 1933-1936; 1947-1958) **(B) *Unity in diversity*:** 1. *European village* (N 5) (A: 103-115; L.:683-686; An.:1039-1044/ 1047-1052; Ard: 1133-1142;Br.: 1364-1368) 2. "Imagined communities" (N 3) • Spanish *fiesta* (Li: 727-730) • "Typical Portuguese" (Kat 2266-2275) • Poles are *thieves* (Ka: 2136-2146; Kat.: 2275-2280) **(C) Signs of difference (among Erasmus students):** 1. nationality/ ethnicity as a sign of difference (N 3) (Al. 103-109; Kri.: 192-198; An.: 838-840) 2. mastery of the local language as a sign of difference (N 3) (Al.:18-20; Br.:1715-1716; J.:1795-1797) 3. "excessive" partying and drinking as opposed to partying and socialising - self (N 5) (Li.:652-664; Ard.: 1169-1173; Chi.: 1459-1462;	**(F) Representations of Locals** 1. Germans vs. Latvians (N 3) (quality of life; politeness/university approach to studying; queuing and pushing) (A:145-150; 72-79; queuing Br 1296-1301; queuing and busy: Br 1334-1338) 2. Latvians vs. Estonians (N 1) (rudeness/politeness: Li 582-588) 3. Latvians vs. Italians (N 1) (financial burdened/ knowledgeable : (Alf 745-750 sincerity and openness/reticence); 4. Canadians vs. Latvians (N 1) (responsible and hardworking locals/light-hearted and less responsible compatriots : Kr 396-402; good fortune vs. struggle; open student community vs. closed; attitudes to studying) 5. Germans/ Austrians vs. Latvians (N 1) (stressed vs. relaxed; obsession with punctuality vs. flexibility; Ul 2710-2721; opened vs. closed student community; difference in the attitudes to studying 2562-2567) 6. Poles vs. Latvians (N 1) (xenophiles vs. xenophobes Ka: 2040-2044) 7. Hungarians vs. Latvians (N 1) (A.: 846-855 happy; caring for politics: 869-880;)	**(G) Images of *successful self* for Friends from home:** 1. capturing and sharing images of the immediate environment via *social networks* (N3) (Myspace, Facebook, etc.) (Chi: 1477-1482; Ja 1827-1838) and *internet telephony* (Skype) (Li:651; Li 707-710)

Jo.: 1882-1889; J. 1791-1792;) **(D) Performativity and situated identities** 1. switching languages – switching allegiances (N 5) (N.:523-529; L.: 559-562; An.: 959-970; Ard.: 1239-1263; Ja.: 1779-1784;) **(E) Membership categorisation:** 1. ethnic identity (N 2) (N.: 508-517; A.: 103-109;) 2. national identity: (N 3) (Ka.:2113-2116; Kat.:2235-2243;Ul: 2653-2660;) 3. multiple/ unstable identities (N 3) Ard: 1123-1132; Ka.: 2108-2116; Kat.2235-2243)		

Appendix 9: Vassiliou's speech transcripts
Speech 1:

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101004_en.htm **(accessed on 08/06/2015)**

Commissioner Vassiliou addresses EU Youth Conference in Leuven

On 4 October, Commissioner Vassiliou presented the new 'Youth on the Move' imitative at a EU Youth Conference in the medieval university town of Leuven. She stressed the importance of education and training in today's Europe. "*We want all young people to have fair and equal access to education and employment. We also want to give every young person the opportunity to be an active citizen in their community*".The Commissioner highlighted the importance of the EU Youth Strategy, which complements Youth on the Move by emphasising youth participation. "*We should be guided by the new provision of the Lisbon Treaty which calls for the EU to encourage youth participation in democratic life. Young people themselves should be ambassadors for the cause.*" The EU Youth Conference, a regular presidency youth policy event, brought together more than 250 young Europeans and policy makers from all Member States. This debate forms part of the ongoing structured dialogue with young people at national and EU level.

Minister, colleagues, friends,

First, let me say how pleased I am to be here with you at the EU Youth conference. These debates are a vital channel for your voices. I want to thank you all for your commitment, sharing your views among yourselves across Europe, and then sharing them with us.

Let me also thank our host, Minister Pascal Smet, and all the Belgium Presidency team for inviting us to Leuven.

This is a city with a vibrant history of learning, going back to the Middle Ages. It is wonderful that medieval universities, like Leuven, still thrive in Europe's intellectual and cultural life today.

Just as in modern times, medieval universities were home to many foreign students. They travelled from one university to the other; they shared knowledge; they broadened each other's perspectives; and they asked awkward questions that changed our understanding of the world!

One such travelling scholar who stayed here was Erasmus of Rotterdam. And as I am sure you know, Erasmus lives on in our well-known exchange programme for students.

Medieval academics were also very active in decisions about university life. They were organised in so-called "nations". They elected representatives who in turn elected the rector of the university.

This is not unlike the build-up to this conference, with national youth councils electing you as their representatives to come here to Leuven…! So we can really say that the medieval scholars sparked democratic participation, including that of young people, one of Europe's core values.

Within our EU Youth Strategy, we continue to build on these traditions of learning and taking part. We want all young people to have fair and equal access to education and employment. We also want to give every young person the opportunity to be an active citizen in their community.

Everyone should feel they have a stake in the wider society to which we all belong. This is why youth participation is so important to us. This important goal is now part of the Treaty of Lisbon, which includes a call to encourage young people to take part in democratic life in Europe.

Having a stake in society is not a one-way street; it also means that society in turn gives everyone the tools to take part. For young people, as your discussions show, this means, above all, good education and training, and decent jobs.

But Europe is still in the grips of the worst economic crisis the Union has ever known. Youth unemployment was already high, and a problem in many countries; but since the start of the crisis, a further one million young people are looking for jobs. More than 21% of the young generation are unemployed.

So, more people are chasing fewer jobs. But too many young people - 1 in 7 - are leaving school early. They leave without the skills and the qualifications that could give them a foothold in the world of work. And as the wider world becomes more complex, it becomes harder to keep up with change when you lack the basic skills.

This is why Europe 2020 – our overall European strategy for overcoming the crisis — focuses so strongly on improving chances for young people. Europe's leaders have agreed that we cannot just continue as before: this has been the first lesson from the economic crisis.

Europe needs to grow again, to recover from recent losses and put ourselves on track for the 21st century. But not any kind of growth. We all agree that we must target growth that is smart, that is sustainable, and that is inclusive.

Giving young people a fair deal in education and work has to be one of the primary conditions for getting there.

This is why we have launched our new initiative, "Youth on the Move": to give Europe's young citizens this better deal, to give everyone the chance to use their potential to the full.

Youth on the Move reinforces the EU Youth Strategy. With both initiatives, we have summoned the political will to better serve Europe's young citizens.

In a nutshell, we have three principal goals: to offer better education and training; to help more young people improve their skills, both for learning and for jobs; and to improve job chances with a new framework for youth employment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me explain a little of our vision for education and training. My colleague, László Andor, will speak afterwards about our plans for youth employment.

For a start, all the Member States have agreed on European targets in education and training: first, to reduce the share of early school leavers from 15% to 10%; and second, to increase the share of young university graduates from 31% at present to 40% by 2020.

We also set out actions for improving the quality of education - from pre-school, to schools and training and into university. We need to turn schools and colleges into modern places of learning, where young people develop the skills for today's and tomorrow's world.

We also believe that people should be able to make the most of the skills they have acquired outside education. Many of you know this firsthand, having developed new skills from your involvement in youth exchanges and youth organisations.

Such forms of learning are very precious, as an extra strength alongside traditional education. Think of the value of leadership, entrepreneurship, initiative and creativity in a society that thrives on innovation and change.

Next year we will propose ways for validating non-formal and informal learning, so that people can acquire better recognition for these learning experiences outside of school.

We also plan to develop a European Skills Passport next year. This will be a way for people to record all their skills and competences, including those learned informally and non-formally. For example, through traineeships, or volunteering, or involvement in NGOs – again, an area you know well.

The EU is also a convinced believer in learning mobility. It is a fast-track to personal development and to the soft skills we need more and more – skills like creativity, communication and self-reliance.

With Youth in Action, Erasmus and all our other mobility programmes, around 300.000 young people every year get the opportunity to spend a period of learning abroad.

We want to open up opportunities for mobility, to make it a step that every young person can take on their learning path.

As part of Youth on the Move, we have made a proposal to Member States, urging them to remove the remaining obstacles to studying or training abroad. We will monitor their progress with a new Mobility Scoreboard.

And finally, ladies and gentlemen, friends,

We have begun to prepare the new EU funding programmes, which will begin in 2014. We want to make the new programmes accessible to as many young people as possible.

I invite all of you to take part in our consultations on the design of the future EU youth programme. I sincerely hope that you will all participate - your opinion matters to us and will help us get it right.

We will also continue to consult you through the Structured Dialogue - our key tool for dialogue with young people and youth organisations on European policy.

I am delighted that within less than a year, we have seen such success in setting up National Working Groups, which are now operational in virtually all the Member States.

All of us – young people and policy makers - can bring our wealth of experience together in a united front. Together we can work for a better future for our young people, for our Europe, for our world. And I know that our debate today will help point us in the right direction!

Thank you.

Speech 2

Source:http://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/speeches/2010/10/20101005_en.htm **(accessed on 08/06/2015)**

Commissioner Vassiliou speaks at Youth on the Move conference in Antwerp

Dear Minister Smet, Mrs Scheys, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me thank the Belgian Presidency for organising today's conference.

By focusing the discussion on learning mobility, you have brought us right into the heart of the EU's core business – freedom of movement.

And at exactly the right time. Not only because it is just two weeks since I launched our flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move', which I will speak about later.

But because we are at the start of the academic year; the start of a new chapter for millions of our young people. All over Europe, young people have been packing their bags and heading off to university. And around 200.000 of them are travelling with a European flag pinned to their backpacks, so to speak…. This is our Erasmus generation of 2010!

By now, after two decades of continuing success, we all know of Erasmus students in our families or our communities – and it makes me very happy that Erasmus has given the European Union a human face.

Of course, learning mobility is no longer limited just to university students or graduates, whether through Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus or the Marie Curie Actions. It should not be only for the elite, but should be made accessible to all young people, especially those from more

disadvantaged groups. Counting in our Youth in Action programme and Leonardo da Vinci, a broad cross-section of young people has discovered the benefits of a learning period abroad.

While they may come from different backgrounds, and go abroad for different reasons, the benefits are the same.

European mobility programmes are all built on the conviction that engaging with people and cultures from other countries is intrinsically valuable.

By spending time immersed in a learning environment abroad, our young people gain valuable knowledge and understanding of other cultures and ways of doing things.

They broaden their perspectives, become more adaptable, more self-reliant, and develop their communication and language skills.

The experience of living and learning in another European country is an immensely valuable foundation stone for a career in our increasingly global European economy.

Individuals and employers alike are convinced of this –40 % of employers we surveyed saw, a learning period abroad as a real advantage.

And as one of our students said, "I realised that the experience made a whole new person of me; and that I would never look at the world and Europe, my home, as I did before."

The fact that learning mobility expands horizons has been a key factor shaping Youth on the Move - our new flagship initiative for young people in education and training and employment.

The younger generation has been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis. Since the crisis erupted, youth unemployment has climbed to over 20%. Almost one in seven young people is neither in education or training nor actively looking for work.

We run the risk of creating a "lost generation" - letting our young people down, just when they need us most.

We have to act, to help young people face these difficult times with confidence – and this is what the Europe 2020 strategy and Youth on the Move aim to do.

Many of the issues that trouble young people's lives already existed before the crisis. But the crisis has brought them to the fore.

One in seven young Europeans leaves school without completing secondary education. Leaving school early will probably burden them for the rest of their lives… Jobs, and job patterns, are becoming more complex. Life is becoming more complex. Very few people can get by with only basic skills

At the same time, fewer than one in three young Europeans obtains a higher education qualification – less than in major competitor countries such as the USA and Japan – and even less again than some of the newly emerging economies. And yet, we are going to need our highly skilled young people more than ever, if we are to fulfil our ambition of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth.

I call it an ambition, ladies and gentlemen – but in fact, we have no choice. We cannot pretend our resources are unlimited. We cannot ignore the growing global competition. And we cannot overlook the poverty and deprivation in our midst.

These are the compelling reasons shaping the Europe 2020 Strategy. They are the compelling reasons for putting education at its heart.

Europe's leaders have set two European targets in education and training:

- to reduce the proportion of early school leavers to below 10% by 2020
- and to increase the share of university graduates (or equivalent) to 40% in the same timeframe.

At the same time, the strategy includes an ambitious target to raise the overall employment rate in the EU from 69% to 75% in the next decade.

Ladies and gentlemen,

you will hear more about the content of Youth on the Move later. But I want to give you a quick overview of what is a highly integrated, holistic framework for reform.

We focus on improving schooling, university education and training; on multiplying opportunities for learning and job mobility; and on better job conditions and opportunities.

The work will be shared with the Member States, of course; and also reaches across sectoral boundaries, so that the combined weight of education and employment policy can be put to work for young people.

So, ladies and gentlemen, what do we hope to achieve?

First of all, smart, inclusive growth depends on highly skilled people. Our schools and training colleges need to give people every chance to build a robust portfolio of skills: solid technical skills combined with the adaptability, risk-taking and communication skills that enable us to thrive in a fast-changing world.

We set out a range of measures to improve the quality of learning opportunities for young people. This includes a new Recommendation to help Member States tackle early school leaving and a new high level group on literacy. We will also work on better recognition of the skills that people gain outside formal education –especially useful for those young people who dropped out of school early.

Secondly – as the European target underlines – we urgently need more graduates to reach our full innovation potential.

We will publish a new modernisation strategy for higher education next year to engage with the top issues for universities –

- developing education programmes that meet the needs and issues of today;

- equipping graduates with employable skills;
- anchoring universities in knowledge partnerships;
- and a strategy for promoting Europe as a study destination in a global higher education "market".

And here we should not forget the key role of Erasmus in shaping Europe into a greatly unified higher education destination.

Think back two decades: the initial Erasmus contact between universities was often the first time the individual players saw themselves within a much greater European landscape.

European quality initiatives; a thirst for more information as to what our universities do; cooperation to remove the barriers to mobility… all the reforms carried forward in the Bologna process and in our modernisation agenda are following in the footsteps of the first Erasmus pioneers.

And this brings me to my third point. Every year, around 200.000 young people opt for Erasmus. Impressive– but it is in fact only a small percentage of our youth population.

Having seen how learning mobility benefits the participants, we want, with Youth on the Move, to open it up to all young people.

We have a multi-pronged approach:

- Helping Member states dismantle obstacles, via a Recommendation on mobility, and monitoring progress through a Mobility Scoreboard;
- devising new forms of mobility, for example, in employment, to give young people work experience which can help ease them onto the jobs market;
- and building a strong groundswell of support for youth mobility: linking up with other funding sources, and getting backing from public authorities, civil society and business.

Finally, Youth on the Move sets out a new European Youth Employment Framework, overseen by my colleague Lazslo Andor, the Commissioner for Employment. It aims to develop active labour market policies to support young people, while urging Member States to reform labour markets so young people find it easier to get secure jobs.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me stress that Youth on the Move is a strategy, not a funding programme. But funding of our ambitions – and of young people's opportunities - will of course be on the table as we develop the next generation of programmes. We have just opened the consultation on these, and I encourage you to contribute.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me finish by recalling why I believe so strongly in learning mobility.

It was Marcel Proust who said, 'the real voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes'. Learning mobility takes our young people to new places. But most of

all, it takes them to a new understanding: it transforms how they see themselves, how they see each other, and how they see the world.

May our combined efforts continue, so that this transformation is within the reach of all young Europeans.

Thank you.

Speech 3

Source: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-345_en.htm **(accessed on 08/06/2015)**

Androulla VASSILIOU

Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

Learning mobility can help to fight the crisis

Conference on the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme

Copenhagen, 9 May 2012

Your Royal Highness,

Minister Østergaard,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

I am very happy to join her Royal Highness Princess Marie in welcoming you to this event. Today we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme, its achievements and its future. I would like to thank the Danish Presidency for their support in organising this conference, and all of you for being here with us.

Twenty-five years' activity is a landmark well worth celebrating. But what makes Erasmus special is more than its longevity. It is truly a remarkable success story of the European Union.

By making student mobility a reality, no other EU programme has been as effective in uniting young Europeans across nations. Over the years, it has become a tangible symbol of the impact and the added-value of European programmes.

Let's take a moment to consider Europe in 1987, when the Erasmus programme was launched.

Our continent was still divided into two political blocs. It was not so easy for people to work or study abroad, even within the EU. We had no common currency, and no common market.

At the same time, though, it was an optimistic and forward-looking time, a new beginning for the European project, under the impulse of several ambitious integration initiatives.

The Erasmus programme was set up as a response to the challenges of those times. The free flow of goods would be complemented by the free flow of knowledge. The common economic space would be strengthened by a new generation of Europe-minded, educated young people.

Erasmus students were pioneers in a Europe where it was still relatively unusual to study abroad. Each Erasmus exchange played a small but important role in bringing European states and peoples closer together.

This is not surprising: young people across the world are often pioneers of change. Indeed, young people were instrumental in bringing about change in Cold War Europe, just as today they are a driving force for political reform in the Arab Spring countries.

Twenty-five years on, Europe is a very different place, politically, socially and economically. New challenges have replaced the old ones – youth employment, just to mention the most pressing of them – but the Erasmus programme continues to be part of the solution.

Today Europe operates under increased global competition. The recent crisis has shown that we must become more creative, more innovative and more entrepreneurial. We need a workforce that has the necessary, high-level skills. This is the challenge Europe is facing.

And learning mobility can contribute to tackling it. By enabling students to spend a period studying or working abroad, Erasmus provides them with more than what is for many the experience of a lifetime. It teaches them a foreign language, it hones their communication skills, it improves their interpersonal and intercultural abilities. And we know that these are all skills that employers value greatly.

And students seem to share our belief: for the past academic year [2010/11], we really have achieved very encouraging figures with the Erasmus programme. Many of the participants are here today. I will present the results later this morning. Let me just say that our goal of three million Erasmus students is well within reach.

Let me turn for one moment to our Erasmus Ambassadors.

When we met in Brussels in January to launch the Erasmus 25th anniversary year, I thanked all of you for your past and future contribution to making this programme a success.

Now, from what I have seen, the launch event proved a source of inspiration to help define and share your vision for the future; to identify the new challenges that the Erasmus programme will need to face up to. That vision is set forth in the Erasmus Ambassadors' Manifesto that you will present later this morning.

I would just like to say that now is the right time to translate this vision into action, with the help of the discussions you will be having today with all the participants. Now it is important to look together at how the future Erasmus for All programme can help to turn your vision into reality. Your input is essential to ensure that the future programme provides the right support to address current and future challenges in education and training.

The EU already has a clear blueprint for action, the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. All future programmes will be geared towards achieving its objectives of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. This includes of course our learning mobility programmes.

Bearing in mind that we need to invest in skills and qualifications, we are proposing a very ambitious new programme. We have reached a key point in the negotiations, and I would like to thank the Danish Presidency for its very constructive engagement. [proposed budget 19.5 billion EUR for 2014-20, i.e. 70% increase].

Erasmus for All will expand what we currently do via the Lifelong Learning Programme and focus strongly on support for three types of activities: learning mobility, policy cooperation and educational partnerships and exchanges.

We want as many as 5 million people, almost double the number now, to have the chance to study or train abroad with a grant from this new programme.

Amongst the many improvements we have foreseen is a better recognition of what students have learned on their Erasmus period by their sending and hosting institutions. Yesterday I had the privilege of awarding 72 higher education institutions with labels recognising their exemplary use of ECTS and Diploma Supplement, two European instruments that make the outcomes of teaching and learning more transparent and facilitate the recognition of studies and qualifications. The representatives of these label holders are among us today. You are the models for all the others to follow. I also want to mention the staff members whose efforts to teach in a foreign university should also be properly recognised.

We also want Erasmus to ensure equal access to all those who wish to participate and are qualified to do so, in particular groups who are underrepresented now. For students from less privileged backgrounds in particular, a learning or traineeship experience in a different country is even more beneficial and can serve as an eye-opener with long-term effects – in other words, Erasmus really can open minds and change lives.

I spoke earlier of today's most pressing challenges, and I mentioned youth unemployment. There is no doubt that we need to invest more in the education and training of our young people. We need to give them the right tools to succeed. This is why the Commission has proposed a Youth Opportunities Initiative, to boost the number of transnational traineeships in companies to give young people the necessary sector-specific, transversal and entrepreneurial skills to prosper in today's labour market and to be able to adapt to the changing requirements of the workplaces of tomorrow. With its emphasis on learning, working and training mobility, here too Erasmus for All can make a decisive contribution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in a world in constant transformation: our societies become more and more complex and diverse; our workplaces are a permanent work-in-progress. Our young people have to cope with increasingly complex tasks and constant change. The jobs of today – and even more those of tomorrow – call for new mind-sets and attitudes.

On a personal level, Erasmus makes people more open, more confident and better prepared to face the unknown. On a more general level, the international experience students and staff bring

back home also contributes to making their own higher education institutions become more modern.

So our challenge here today is to come up with ideas that will help us do even better in the future, especially in those areas where there is room for improvement - for instance, how to ensure equal access and full recognition of qualifications; how to enhance staff mobility and its positive impact on the modernization of higher education; how to reach out to neighbouring countries - and of course how to strengthen the links between education and the world of work.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate all of you who have been involved in the Erasmus programme in these past 25 years. You have really achieved some impressive results, and I look forward to the progress we will continue to make together in the future.

I wish you a successful Erasmus conference.

Thank you.

Appendix 10: Letter to Erasmus co-ordinators at the Latvian Universities

Dear Mrs X and Mrs X,

As I'm conducting a research on Erasmus students' experiences and everyday life in Latvia, I would like to ask for your assistance in forwarding this e-mail to all of the incoming Erasmus students. I invite Erasmus students to participate in my study by filling in a questionnaire and taking part in an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. If they are interested and happy to share their views and experiences, could they please contact me via email (dina.strong@lu.lv) in order to arrange a meeting.

I really appreciate your support with my research.

Sincerely,

Dina Strong

Appendix 11: Online institutional texts

Corpus of key online texts published on the website of the State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia collected for the analysis (www.viaa.lv - accessed on 08.06.2019) and annotated with translation of key fragments :

From:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?year=2019&text_id=40611

Erasmus+ mobilitāte sniedz iespējas un rada izaicinājumus Latvijas darba tirgum

15.04.2014

Diskutējot par strādājošo studentu *Erasmus+* mobilitātes izaicinājumiem, šodien Eiropas Savienības (ES) mājā darba devēji, studenti un augstskolu pārstāvji bija vienisprātis, ka *Erasmus+* mobilitāte gan sniedz virkni iespēju(a range of options), gan rada izaicinājumus darba tirgum. Statistika liecina, ka Latvijas uzņēmumi kļūst arvien atvērtāki ārvalstu praktikantiem, un arī Latvijas augstskolu studenti arvien biežāk dod priekšroku praksei, nevis studiju periodam ārvalstīs.

Darba devējam praktisks ieguvums
Viens no iemesliem, kas attur strādājošos studentus no *Erasmus+* mobilitātes, ir bailes pazaudēt savu vietu Latvijas darba tirgū – ne visi darba devēji ir gatavi palaist savu darbinieku mobilitātē uz vairākiem mēnešiem. Latvijas Universitātes ārlietu vadītājas **Alīnes Gržibovskas** pieredze liecina, ka valsts institūcijas ir labvēlīgāk noskaņotas pret savu darbinieku došanos Erasmus+ praksē un studijām, jo redz izaugsmi ilgtermiņā.

"Kad man radās iespēja doties studiju mobilitātē uz Prāgu, mana vadība bija ļoti atvērta," stāsta bijušais *Erasmus+*students, SIA "Skonto būve" būvdarbu vadītāja palīgs **Mareks Petrovskis**. "Redzēju, ka iegūtās zināšanas vēlāk varēšu izmantot darbā – Čehijā apguvu darbu ar 3D modelēšanas programmu, kuru tagad izmantoju ikdienā. Domāju, ja cilvēkam patīk savs darbs, viņš pēc pieredzes gūšanas ārvalstīs atgriezīsies pie sava darba devēja." Uzņēmums pieņem Erasmus+ praksē arī ārvalstu studentus un redz, ka šāda apmaiņa nes ieguvumus abām pusēm, palīdz kolektīvam savstarpējā komunikācijā un audzē starpkultūru kompetenci.

Tulkošanas uzņēmuma "Hieroglifs" pārstāve **Samanta Baumane** dalījās pieredzē, ka viņu uzņēmumu ārvalstu praktikanti atrod paši. "Pat ja praktikantiem nav izcilas angļu valodas zināšanas, bet ir uzņēmība apgūt jaunas lietas, tas būs augstā vērtē – viņi organizē pasākumus un palīdz sazināties ar ārvalstu tirgiem," atzīst S. Baumane.

Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācijas pārstāve **Anita Līce** akcentēja, ka mazāk kā pusei Latvijas darba devēju ir pieredze, nodrošinot praksi vietējiem jauniešiem, tāpēc gatavība ārvalstu Erasmus+ praktikantiem ir jautājums, pie kā jāstrādā. "*Erasmus+* ir lielisks instruments, kā veicināt starptautisko kompetenci vietējā darba tirgū, kas Latvijai kā mazai, bet atvērtai ekonomikai ir ļoti būtiski."

Kavē ģimenes un finansiālie apstākļi

"Mūsu veiktās mobilitātes aptaujas liecina, ka viens no iemesliem, kāpēc jaunieši neizmanto Erasmus+ mobilitātes iespējas, ir ģimenes apstākļi – attiecības un draugi, kas notur Latvijā, kā arī finansiālie aspekti," norādīja Latvijas Studentu apvienības starptautiskā virziena vadītāja **Katrīna Sproģe**.

Erasmus+ studiju mobilitāte prasa no studenta nopietnāku ieguldījumu visu mobilitātes laiku, jo paredz saistības – jāatved noteikts kredītpunktu skaits. Prakses gadījumā, savukārt, nepieciešams mērķtiecīgāks darbs pirms mobilitātes – īstā darba devēja atrašana valstī, uz kuru plānots doties.

Latvijas Universitātes ārlietu vadītāja A. Gržibovska uzskata, ka gan studentam, gan darba devējam tieši abu mobilitāšu kombinācija ir visveiksmīgākais risinājums, jo studijas dod bāzes zināšanas, bet prakse – iemaņas. Turklāt *Erasmus+* mobilitāte dod pienesumu valsts ekonomikai un attīstībai, jo šie studenti atgriežas mūsu valstī, atšķirībā no tiem, kuri nolēmuši savu augstākās izglītības diplomu iegūt ārvalstu augstskolās.

Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūras (VIAA) dati liecina, ka Latvijas studentu skaits *Erasmus+* praksē kopš 2009. gada audzis divas reizes, savukārt studiju mobilitātes popularitāte kopš 2012. gada pakāpeniski krītas. Uzņēmējiem Erasmus+ programmā ir iespēja uzņemt praksē ārvalstu studentus uz laiku no 2 līdz 12 mēnešiem, doties kā vieslektori uz ārvalstu augstskolām uz laiku no 1 dienas līdz 2 mēnešiem, kā arī palaist studējošos darbiniekus studijās uz ārvalstu augstskolām uz 3 – 12 mēnešiem, vai arī praksē uz ārvalstu uzņēmumiem uz laiku no 2 mēnešiem līdz gadam.

Diskusiju organizēja VIAA. Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija ir atbildīgā ministrija par ES *Erasmus+* programmas īstenošanu Latvijā, savukārt VIAA un Jaunatnes starptautisko programmu aģentūra nodrošina ES *Erasmus+*programmas ieviešanu.

3.

From:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?text_id=39868

Erasmus+ programmai augstākajā izglītībā priekšā jauni izaicinājumi un iespējas

13.12.2013

Noslēdzot *Erasmus+* trīsdesmitgades jubileju, Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra (VIAA) 8. decembrī organizēja tematisko konferenci par *Erasmus+* ietekmi augstākās izglītības sektorā "No *Erasmus* līdz *Erasmus+*: kvalitāte un ietekme", kurā programmas īstenotāji un eksperti izvērtēja paveikto, dalījās pieredzē un diskutēja par tās nākotni.

Programmai jauni izaicinājumi

Atklājot pasākumu, VIAA direktora vietniece **Elita Zondaka** akcentēja, ka *Erasmus+* programma ir lielākā un veiksmīgākā mobilitātes programma pasaulē, kas sākusies Eiropā un turpina paplašināt savu darbību

arī citur pasaulē. Tā palīdzējusi mūsu augstskolām kļūt atpazīstamām starptautiskā vidē, par ko liecina arī iebraucošo studentu skaita pieaugums pēdējo gadu laikā.

Kopumā augstākās izglītības jomā Latvijā 2015./2016. gadā studiju, prakses un akadēmiskā personāla mobilitātē iebrauca 1447 ārvalstnieki, savukārt 2010./2011. gadā – 1194.

Erasmus+ studiju vai prakses laikā iegūtās pieredzes atzīšana arī ir bijis būtisks mobilitātes veicinātājs.Nereti tā palīdz novērst arī smadzeņu aizplūšanas fenomenu, jo studentam ir jāatgriežas savā mītnes valstī.

Skatoties nākotnē, vairāki konferences delegāti uzsvēra nepieciešamību mazināt administratīvo slogu studentiem un augstskolām, kā arī ierobežot šķēršļus vīzu saņemšanai. Latvijas augstskolas vēlētos lielāku atbalstu no valsts vienotas internacionalizācijas stratēģijas jomā.

Programmas prioritātes nākamajā periodā būs sociālās iekļaušanas jautājumi un dažādu virtuālu risinājumu attīstīšana.

Studentiem svarīgs finansiālais atbalsts

Pārstāvot studentu viedokli, Latvijas Studentu apvienība (association) prezentēja studentu aptaujas rezultātus, kas liecina, ka studentu vidū programma ir labi pazīstama un iecienīta, taču arvien vairāk studentu lēmumu doties mobilitātē sāk ietekmēt finansiālais segums, kas gandrīz pusei aptaujāto šķiet nepietiekams.

Jāņem vērā, ka arī studentu saistības tepat Latvijā, piemēram, darbs un ģimene, mēdz būt iemesli, kāpēc jaunieši mēdz atteikties no *Erasmus+* iespējām. Tajā pat laikā studenti ļoti atvērti raugās (looking/ considering) uz mobilitāti visā pasaulē, vēlētos redzēt jaunus mobilitātes virzienus, piemēram, konferenču apmeklēšanai, kā arī sagaida lielāku atbalstu no pasniedzējiem, motivējot iesaistīties programmā.

Ēro Lonurms (*Eero Loonurm*) no *Erasmus+* nacionālās aģentūras Igaunijā (*Archimedes Foundation*) iepazīstināja ar Igaunijas pieredzi *Erasmus+* programmas īstenošanā. Kaimiņvalsts saskaras ar izaicinājumu, ka tajā iebraucošās mobilitātes apjoms ir lielāks par izbraucošo mobilitāti, kas Latvijā ir tieši pretēji. Turklāt ap 65% studentu, kas izbrauc no Igaunijas, dod priekšroku tieši praksei uzņēmumā.

Konferencē īpaša uzmanība tika pievērsta arī *Erasmus+* tēlam un reputācijai, un E. Lonurms akcentēja, ka kopumā *Erasmus+* programmai ir laba atpazīstamība, bet nereti tai ir jāsadzīvo arī ar ballīšu programmas tēlu, tāpēc visām iesaistītajām pusēm jāstrādā kopā un jāatceras, ka ikviens *Erasmus+* students ir programmas vēstnesis.

Labā prakse Baltijā - internacionalizācija

Konference norisinājās *Erasmus+* starptautiskās sadarbības aktivitāšu ietvaros, un tajā piedalījās dalībnieki no Lietuvas, Igaunijas, Zviedrijas, Slovēnijas un Lielbritānijas. Dalībnieki no Igaunijas un Lietuvas dalījās ar savas valsts pieredzi *Erasmus* programmas īstenošanā un iepazīstināja ar labās prakses piemēriem.

Lietuvas Veselības zinātņu universitāte dalījās pieredzē, kā tai izdevās iegūt apbalvojumu par labāko *Erasmus+*koordinatoru komandu valstī, organizējot savā augstskolā *Erasmus* dienas, personāla apmācību nedēļu un īstenojot citas aktivitātes, kas palīdz veicināt universitātes internacionalizāciju mājās. Līdzīgas aktivitātes notiek arī Tallinas Tehnoloģiju universitātē Igaunijā, kur norisinās arī īpaša ārvalstu studiju diena, kurā partneraugstskolas var iepazīstināt ar sevi.

Latvijas Lauksaimniecības Universitāte (LLU) iepazīstināja ar starptautiskās sadarbības projektu par augstākās izglītības modernizāciju Centrālāzijā, kas vērsta uz pārtikas drošuma sistēmām un standartiem un tapa sadarbībā ar partneriem no Tadžikistānas un Kirgizstānas. LLU pieredze apliecina, cik plašas iespējas Latvijas augstskolām paver dalība *Erasmus+* programmas centralizētajās aktivitātēs.

Konferences prezentācijas apkoptā veidā pieejamas *Erasmus+* sadaļā pasākumi.

Atskats bildēs uz tematisko konferenci par programmas ietekmi augstākās izglītības sektorā "No *Erasmus* līdz *Erasmus+*: kvalitāte un ietekme" VIAA *Flickr* kontā.

4.

From:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?text_id=20724

VIAA mājas lapā pieejams materiāls par Eiropas augstāko izglītību pasaulē

05.09.2013

Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūras (VIAA) mājas lapā publicēts Eiropas Komisijas izdots informatīvs materiāls par Eiropas augstāko izglītību pasaulē.

Materiālā „*European higher education in the world – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions*" definētas augstākās izglītības institūciju un dalībvalstu prioritātes augstākās izglītības internacionalizācijas procesā, kā arī plānotais Eiropas Savienības ieguldījums nākamajā plānošanas periodā (no 2014. līdz 2020.gadam) jaunās Eiropas Savienības atbalsta programmas izglītības, apmācības, jaunatnes un sporta jomā *Erasmus+* ietvaros.

Eiropas Savienības universitātēs un citās augstākās izglītības iestādēs mācās vairāk nekā 19 miljoni studējošo. Komisija uzsver, ka universitātēm arī jāsekmē starptautiskas perspektīvas iespējas to 85 % studentu vidū, kuri nav mobili, lai viņi arī varētu iegūt tās starptautiskās prasmes, kuras nepieciešamas globalizētajā pasaulē. Tas nozīmē, ka universitātēm jāizstrādā starptautiskas mācību programmas, jāveicina valodu apguve un jāpaplašina digitālās mācības.

Kopumā paredzams, ka augstākās izglītības studentu skaits pasaulē četrkāršosies — no aptuveni 100 miljoniem 2000. gadā līdz 400 miljoniem 2030. gadā; īpaši straujš pieaugums tiek prognozēts Āzijas un Latīņamerikas valstīs. Eiropa pašlaik piesaista 45 % no visiem starptautiskajiem studentiem, taču tās konkurenti strauji palielina ieguldījumus augstākajā izglītībā. Vislielākais skaits starptautiski mobilo studentu nāk no Ķīnas, Indijas un Dienvidkorejas.

Jaunā programma *Erasmus+*, kuru atklās 2014. gada janvārī, studentiem no ārpuseiropas valstīm pirmo reizi sniegs iespēju daļu no studiju laika pavadīt kādā no Eiropas universitātēm vai otrādi. Finansējums tiks piešķirts 135 000 studentu un mācībspēku apmaiņai starp ES un pārējām pasaules valstīm — tas ir par 100

000 vairāk nekā saskaņā ar pašreizējo programmu *Erasmus Mundus*, kas papildina 3 miljonu studentu un mācībspēku apmaiņu ES robežās.

Informatīvais materiāls „*European higher education in the world – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions*" pieejams VIAA mājas lapas sadaļā Erasmus+.

5.

From:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?year=2014&text_id=24148

Rīgā norisinās Erasmus+ kontaktseminārs

11.09.2013

No šī gada 10. līdz 13. septembrim Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra (VIAA) organizē ES programmas izglītības, apmācību, jaunatnes un sporta jomā *Erasmus*+ kontaktsemināru „*Interdisciplinary approach in teaching and learning to promote learners creativity and entrepreneurship skills*".

Semināra mērķis ir dot iespēju dažādām institūcijām, kas saistītas ar vispārējās un profesionālās izglītības satura pilnveidi un kvalitātes uzlabošanu, kā arī šo skolu pārstāvjiem veidot kontaktus tālākai sadarbībai un veicināt augstas kvalitātes *Erasmus*+ stratēģisko partnerību projektu pieteikumu sagatavošanu 2015. gada projektu konkursam.

Kontaktseminārā piedalās dalībnieki no 12 *Erasmus+* programmas valstīm, tajā skaitā no Latvijas.

Papildu informācija: VIAA ES Izglītības programmu departamenta Skolu projektu nodaļas vadītāja Baiba Sermuliņa, tālrunis: 67814329, e-pasts: baiba.sermulina@viaa.gov.lv.

Kontaktsemināra darba programma

Kontaktsemināra darba valoda ir angļu.

Fotogaleriju no kontaktsemināra **skatīt šeit**.

6.

From:
http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/erasmus_plus_jaunumi/?text_id=23737

Programmu Erasmus+ Latvijā atklās komisāre Andrula Vasiliu

15.01.2013

Pirmdien, 20. janvārī, Eiropas izglītības, kultūras, daudzvalodības un jaunatnes lietu komisāre Andrula Vasiliu *(Androulla Vassiliou)* Latvijā atklās jauno Eiropas Savienības izglītības, apmācības, jaunatnes un sporta atbalsta programmu *Erasmus+*. Programmas atklāšanas konferencē, ko rīko Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra (VIAA), izglītības politikas veidotāji diskutēs par *Erasmus+*mērķu īstenošanu.

Konferencē „ES atbalsta programma izglītības, apmācības, jaunatnes un sporta jomā *Erasmus+*" sabiedrību iepazīstinās ar jaunās programmas mērķiem un informēs par Latvijas izglītības, jaunatnes un sporta politikas saistību ar jaunās ES programmas *Erasmus+* atbalsta iespējām.

Atklāšanas konference notiks 20. janvārī plkst. 10:00 viesnīcā *Radisson Blu Hotel* Latvija, Elizabetes ielā 55, Rīgā.

Konferencē piedalīsies izglītības un zinātnes ministrs Vjačeslavs Dombrovskis, Saeimas Izglītības, kultūras un zinātnes komisijas priekšsēdētāja Ina Druviete, Izglītības un zinātnes ministrijas (IZM) valsts sekretāre Sanda Liepiņa un VIAA direktore Dita Traidās.

Konferences turpinājumā notiks paneļdiskusija „Izglītības un uzņēmējdarbības sektoru tuvināšana prasmju attīstības un nodarbinātības veicināšanai", kurā piedalīsies sociālo partneru, jaunatnes organizāciju, valsts un pašvaldību iestāžu pārstāvji no dažādiem izglītības un uzņēmējdarbības sektoriem.

Konferences darba programma:

„Joprojām sabiedrībā aktuāls ir jautājums, kā uzlabot saikni starp izglītību, zinātni un uzņēmējdarbību, lai veicinātu ne tikai Latvijas, bet arī Eiropas konkurētspēju pasaulē. Mēs esam pārliecināti, ka jaunā *Erasmus+* programma spēs uzrunāt, iedvesmot un parādīt daudzpusīgus starpvalstu sadarbības veidus, lai tuvinātu šos sektorus, reizē attīstot iesaistīto indivīdu kompetences," komentē VIAA direktore Dita Traidās.

Plašāku informāciju par programmu Erasmus+, projektu izstrādes vadlīnijām un iesniegšanas kārtību skatieties Eiropas Komisijas mājaslapā, kā arī VIAA mājaslapas www.viaa.gov.lv sadaļā „Erasmus+".

Programmā *Erasmus+* apvienotas līdzšinējās ES programmas, aptverot visas izglītības jomas: Mūžizglītības programmu — *Erasmus* (augstākā izglītība), *Leonardo da Vinci* (profesionālā izglītība), *Comenius* (skolu izglītība), *Grundtvig* (pieaugušo izglītība), „Jaunatne darbībā" un piecas starptautiskās programmas *(Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink* un programma sadarbībai ar rūpnieciski attīstītajām valstīm). Pirmo reizi *Erasmus+* piedāvās ES atbalstu sporta jomā.

IZM ir atbildīgā ministrija par programmas īstenošanu Latvijā, savukārt VIAA un Jaunatnes starptautisko programmu aģentūra nodrošinās programmas ieviešanu. Par projektu konkursiem izglītības un apmācības jomā vairāk var uzzināt www.viaa.gov.lv sadaļā „Erasmus+". Savukārt par jaunatnes jomas projektiem - www.jaunatne.gov.lv.

http://viaa.gov.lv/files/news/3901/erasmus8_2.pdf

Promotion booklet advertising Erasmus programme

10.01.2013.

Top iemesli, lai piedalītos Erasmus programmā: Dalība Erasmus programmā ir lielisks ieraksts CV Iespēja studēt un strādāt starptautiskā vidē, saņemot stipendiju Iespēja atgriezties Latvijā motivētākam, pārliecinātākam un neatkarīgākam Iespēja uzlabot svešvalodas zināšanas Iespēja ieg?t draugus citās valstīs Iespēja iepazīt citas kult?ras un ieg?t plašāku redzesloku un daudzpusīgāku skatījumu uz dzīvi Erasmus studiju vai prakses laiku ieskaita studiju periodā Latvijā

Erasmus+ programmai augstākajā izglītībā priekšā jauni izaicinājumi un iespējas

Noslēdzot *Erasmus+* trīsdesmitgades jubileju, Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra (VIAA) 8. decembrī organizēja tematisko konferenci par *Erasmus+* ietekmi augstākās izglītības sektorā "No *Erasmus* līdz *Erasmus+*: kvalitāte un ietekme", kurā programmas īstenotāji un eksperti izvērtēja paveikto, dalījās pieredzē un diskutēja par tās nākotni.

Programmai jauni izaicinājumi

Atklājot pasākumu, VIAA direktora vietniece Elita Zondaka akcentēja, ka *Erasmus+* programma ir lielākā un veiksmīgākā mobilitātes programma pasaulē, kas sākusies Eiropā un turpina paplašināt savu darbību arī citur pasaulē. Tā palīdzējusi mūsu augstskolām kļūt atpazīstamām starptautiskā vidē, par ko liecina arī iebraucošo studentu skaita pieaugums pēdējo gadu laikā.

Kopumā augstākās izglītības jomā Latvijā 2013./2014. gadā studiju, prakses un akadēmiskā personāla mobilitātē iebrauca 1447 ārvalstnieki, savukārt 2010./2011. gadā – 1194.

Erasmus+ studiju vai prakses laikā iegūtās pieredzes atzīšana arī ir bijis būtisks mobilitātes veicinātājs.Nereti tā palīdz novērst arī smadzeņu aizplūšanas fenomenu, jo studentam ir jāatgriežas savā mītnes valstī.

Skatoties nākotnē, vairāki konferences delegāti uzsvēra nepieciešamību mazināt administratīvo slogu studentiem un augstskolām, kā arī ierobežot šķēršļus vīzu saņemšanai. Latvijas augstskolas vēlētos lielāku atbalstu no valsts vienotas internacionalizācijas stratēģijas jomā.

Programmas prioritātes nākamajā periodā būs sociālās iekļaušanas jautājumi un dažādu virtuālu risinājumu attīstīšana.

Studentiem svarīgs finansiālais atbalsts

Pārstāvot studentu viedokli, Latvijas Studentu apvienība prezentēja studentu aptaujas rezultātus, kas liecina, ka studentu vidū programma ir labi pazīstama un iecienīta, taču arvien vairāk studentu lēmumu doties mobilitātē sāk ietekmēt finansiālais segums, kas gandrīz pusei aptaujāto šķiet nepietiekams.

Jāņem vērā, ka arī studentu saistības tepat Latvijā, piemēram, darbs un ģimene, mēdz būt iemesli, kāpēc jaunieši mēdz atteikties no *Erasmus+* iespējām. Tajā pat laikā studenti ļoti atvērti raugās uz mobilitāti visā

pasaulē, vēlētos redzēt jaunus mobilitātes virzienus, piemēram, konferenču apmeklēšanai, kā arī sagaida lielāku atbalstu no pasniedzējiem, motivējot iesaistīties programmā.

Ēro Lonurms (*Eero Loonurm*) no *Erasmus+* nacionālās aģentūras Igaunijā (*Archimedes Foundation*) iepazīstināja ar Igaunijas pieredzi *Erasmus+* programmas īstenošanā. Kaimiņvalsts saskaras ar izaicinājumu, ka tajā iebraucošās mobilitātes apjoms ir lielāks par izbraucošo mobilitāti, kas Latvijā ir tieši pretēji. Turklāt ap 65% studentu, kas izbrauc no Igaunijas, dod priekšroku tieši praksei uzņēmumā.

Konferencē īpaša uzmanība tika pievērsta arī *Erasmus+* tēlam un reputācijai, un E. Lonurms akcentēja, ka kopumā *Erasmus+* programmai ir laba atpazīstamība, bet nereti tai ir jāsadzīvo arī ar ballīšu programmas tēlu, tāpēc visām iesaistītajām pusēm jāstrādā kopā un jāatceras, ka ikviens *Erasmus+* students ir programmas vēstnesis.

Labā prakse Baltijā – internacionalizācija

Konference norisinājās *Erasmus+* starptautiskās sadarbības aktivitāšu ietvaros, un tajā piedalījās dalībnieki no Lietuvas, Igaunijas, Zviedrijas, Slovēnijas un Lielbritānijas. Dalībnieki no Igaunijas un Lietuvas dalījās ar savas valsts pieredzi *Erasmus* programmas īstenošanā un iepazīstināja ar labās prakses piemēriem.

Lietuvas Veselības zinātņu universitāte dalījās pieredzē, kā tai izdevās iegūt apbalvojumu par labāko *Erasmus+*koordinatoru komandu valstī, organizējot savā augstskolā *Erasmus* dienas, personāla apmācību nedēļu un īstenojot citas aktivitātes, kas palīdz veicināt universitātes internacionalizāciju mājās. Līdzīgas aktivitātes notiek arī Tallinas Tehnoloģiju universitātē Igaunijā, kur norisinās arī īpaša ārvalstu studiju diena, kurā partneraugstskolas var iepazīstināt ar sevi.

Latvijas Lauksaimniecības Universitāte (LLU) iepazīstināja ar starptautiskās sadarbības projektu par augstākās izglītības modernizāciju Centrālāzijā, kas vērsta uz pārtikas drošuma sistēmām un standartiem un tapa sadarbībā ar partneriem no Tadžikistānas un Kirgizstānas. LLU pieredze apliecina, cik plašas iespējas Latvijas augstskolām paver dalība *Erasmus+* programmas centralizētajās aktivitātēs.

Konferences prezentācijas apkoptā veidā pieejamas *Erasmus+* sadaļā pasākumi.

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